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ABSTRACT

This document published biannually, consists of two double issues of a newsletter devoted to literacy across the curriculum in Canada and elsewhere. Each double issue contains the following: feature articles; annotated bibliographies and reviews; local news; conference announcements and other announcements; and descriptions of events and resource materials available at the Center for Literacy in Montreal, Quebec. The following feature articles are: "(Mis)Trusting Teachers: A Return to Hard Times?"; "Technology and Basic Skills in the Workplace"; "Networking in the UK"; "Healthy Weight: A Workshop Plan" (Mary Norton, Pat Campbell); "Problematizing Women's Literacy: The CCLOW Experience" (Linda Shohet); "Women and Literacy: A Male Perspective" (Anson Green); "Adults with Learning Difficulties: Strategies for Visual and Auditory Problems" (Pat Hatt); "Media Education as Literacy Education" (Winston Emery, Lee Rother); "Verbal and Visual Literacies: Summaries from Research"; "Concerning Literacy and Technology"; and "How Many Low Literature Adults Are There in Canada, the US,

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and UK? Should the IALS Estimates Be Revised?" (Thomas G. Sticht). The second double issue (issues 3 & 4) contains a pull-out insert that reports on a 6-week community writing project connecting literacy and the literary and includes samples of the student writing produced during the project. (MN)

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LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUMEDIA FOCUS (LACMF)

Volume 14, Issues 1 & 2
Volume 14, Issues 3 & 4

The Centre for Literacy
Montreal, Quebec

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DOUBLE ISSUE INCLUDES **WORKING PAPER ON LITERACY AND ICT**

LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUMEDIA FOCUS

Volume 14 • Issues 1 & 2

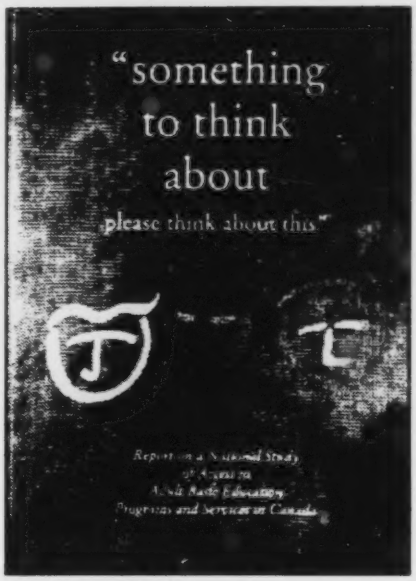
Connecting literacy, media and technology in the schools, community and workplace

Something to think about...

It will not surprise many in the field to learn that adult basic education students have limited access to programs in most parts of Canada. Although most of us know the problems in our own province, some of us continue to believe or hope that it is better elsewhere. A recent national study on access to ABE entitled *Something to think about: please think about this* puts those hopes to rest.

According to research carried out by Susan Hoddinott and a team of teacher and social policy researchers, provision across this country is almost uniformly dismal. And if it is better in one place or another, it is almost impossible to find out since the data on funding cannot be any more easily accessed than the ABE programs. [See Box, p. 2.]

Hoddinott's team used a research design that focused on the local level of practice where they believe social policy can be best understood. There is a detailed description of the model in one chapter. They felt that the kind of information they were seeking could not be gathered in a single snapshot interview, but needed extended time, and that critical reflection had to be built into the process. They finally settled on four local sites in different provinces which remain unnamed. Teachers and students worked together on questions, journals, and probing reflections over a semester. There is no fingerpointing at any province, but in the end, regardless of the levels of support, a generalized picture of limited access emerges across the country.



Fooling ourselves

This is not to say that there are not exemplary programs scattered everywhere. However, if we were to look systematically at all the programs that have been highlighted in the past decade in books or articles, we would find that very few of them still exist. Yet having them documented in print, we create the impression that this country is a model of good provision.

Two personal experiences speak volumes. At a workplace education conference in the UK last month, a participant asked me about a Canadian workplace literacy program that was written up widely in the first part of the 1990s. (I also heard it referred to in the present tense at a Conference Board of Canada conference two years ago.) But that program died two years after it began. The company that ran it will not even discuss it today. The power of print, even six years later, creates the impression that this is an ongoing program with sustained company support.

INSIDE

(Mis) Trusting teachers: A return to Hard Times? 4
TO PONDER 7
Technology and basic skills in the workplace 8
Networking in the UK 11
IN THE CLASSROOM: Health & Literacy 13
REVIEWS
Something to think about: 15

PULL-OUT INSERT
WORKING PAPERS ON LITERACY
Literacy and ICT

REVIEWS
Family Literacy in Canada 17
A Community-Based Approach to Literacy Programs 18
Learning for our Health 19
Empowerment Health Education in Adult Literacy 20
LOCAL NEWS 21
CONFERENCES 23
Readings on new technologies and media 26
ANNOUNCEMENTS 28
HAPPENING AT THE CENTRE 29
AVAILABLE AT THE CENTRE 31

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More recently, a book on Canadian models of family literacy published in late 1998 focuses on some outstanding programs in eight provinces. [See Review, p. 17]. I cannot comment on programs in other provinces, but the example from my province is not currently running. I know that program was absolutely the model of excellence portrayed, with a six-year record of success. That did not save it when the school boards were organized last year. In the shuffle, it was dropped "temporarily;" there is hope that it may be revived. Nobody needs to be told how quickly a program can die after years of nurturing to maturity, if funding ceases or structures change.

The title of Hoddinott's study was taken from a prose poem written by a student at one site when her program was threatened with closure.

These are not rare examples. Most programs in this country are run as projects. According to Hoddinott, sustained funding for academic upgrading, much of it transferred from the federal level, "has been declining since the 1970s and is now negligible. This leaves the provincial or municipal social services department as virtually the only other public agency which either supports adults to enrol in adult up-grading programs or allows them to enrol while they continue to receive assistance." (73)

This seems depressing reading, until we realize that exposing the emperor is a first step to getting him some real clothes. We have been salving our consciences and undermining

Accounting for adult basic provision in Canada

Unlike most other areas of social policy, it is almost impossible to present a full *comparative* picture of the state of Adult Basic Education provision in Canada, since both the range of information available and the quality of this information is so highly variable. In virtually every province and territory, for example, the researchers experienced some degrees of difficulty in ascertaining levels of funding for Literacy and Adult Basic Education; this was not necessarily because jurisdictions were unwilling to provide such information (though some were more forthcoming than others) but because, in the overwhelming majority of cases, there is no clear accounting of expenditures on these services. Where provincial/territorial budget figures for Literacy and Adult Basic Education are available, it is frequently unclear what they encompass— whether, for example, they refer only to direct provincial allocations from the education and training funding pool or whether they also include social welfare spending on training and/or federal training funds. In some cases, global figures for Literacy and Adult Basic Education may also include expenditures on income assistance for students who are sponsored by federal or provincial agencies to attend programs, though the documentation will not necessarily indicate this. Without such clarifications, comparisons of provincial/territorial funding commitments to the Adult Basic Education service are meaningless.

(*Something to think about*, pp.165-166)

LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUMEDIA FOCUS

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The Centre for Literacy is committed to supporting and improving literacy practices in schools, community and workplace. It is dedicated to increasing public understanding of the changing definition of literacy in a complex society.

Literacy for the 21st century

Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

The opinions expressed in articles, other than those signed by the editor, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the philosophy or policy of The Centre for Literacy.

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ourselves in constantly promoting "Best Practices" and "Model Programs" at the expense of studying policy impacts and lobbying for systemic change and real access.

This issue

This double issue of LACMF juxtaposes some of the contradictory policies and practices around literacy in many countries. Conflicts over literacy in the K-12 school system serve as a useful foil for discussions about adult literacy. We have included a full text Working Paper on Literacy in Chris Abbott's Discussion of Literacy and ICT. Written as an advisory document for the British government, it is intended to influence policy. It highlights the contradictions in current definitions of literacy in several UK education agencies which then become the basis for contradictory policies in the schools. Abbott argues for coherence and a broad integrated vision of literacy and ICT.

This issue introduces our new international Advisory Panel on Media and Technology (p. 21). It presents articles on (mis) trusting teachers (pp.4-6), on a workplace program that has sustainability (pp.8-10), on workplace basic skills (pp.11-12), on health and literacy (pp. 13 -14), and on recent thinking about technology and media (pp. 26-27). It reviews publications on participatory education (pp. 18-20) and offers the regular listings of conferences and events.

A review of *Something to think about* and selected recommendations are on p. 15.
[LS]

"something to think about - please think about this"

The title of the report was taken from a composition written by a student at one of the four research sites in response to the threatened closure of the program.

Why I think it's important for programs like this to exist

"something to think about - please think about this"

For whatever reason
(be it poverty or ignorance)
people were held back from going to,
continuing in, or finishing school.
Here are a few examples and/or reasons:
A parent dies or becomes very sick;
the child has to go to work or stay home to look after or support the family.
It's not their fault; it still happens.
Negative messages from mother or father or anyone - thinks work is better for the child, don't need an education, won't get far anyway.
Still happens.
Get and/or got married young.
Husband and/or family keeps wife/girlfriend down, out of school, stuck.
Still happens.
Drugs, alcohol, bad decisions.
Still happens.
Violence in the home, isolation, being denied information about people, places, things.
Still happens.
My point is, sometimes there are circumstances beyond our control, and opportunities haven't always been there, and being an adolescent and having a generational history like
any or all of the above,
it only makes sense that bad decisions are made.
Even today many teenagers leave home, get kicked out, or have to go to work, leaving schooling behind.
And sometimes they just think they don't need to finish school to get a job
only to find out that that's not true.

(Mis) Trusting teachers: A return to Hard Times?

A new program for Teacher Training recently implemented in the UK mandates a national body to carry out rigourous inspection over four years of both teacher training programs and teachers in schools. A University training program which fails inspection can be closed. Schools with a serious number of problems (e.g. 1/3 of the lessons) will be warned and reinspected. If problems are serious enough they can be closed. A National Literacy Strategy has simultaneously prescribed a Daily Literacy Hour in the schools with steps laid out for teachers to follow. Both the Teacher Training and Literacy Hour are seen by many within the field as rigid and mistrustful of teachers— a hallmark of late 1990s public policy— but there is not as clear a consensus on these issues among British English teachers as there might once have been. Since these concerns in some form touch English teachers in all countries, the diverse positions are worth considering [See BOX].

At the Global Conversations on Language and Literacy conference hosted by NCTE & NATE in Bordeaux in August 1998, one strand examined current trends in public policy on literacy and teacher training in English-speaking countries. This article summarizes some thoughts from selected presenters in several sessions. [LS]

British English teachers ambivalence about new UK teaching policies

... In England, from within the community of subject specialist professionals, there is evidence of a sense of uncertainty about where English should go next. The hegemony of new realism and pragmatism operates in a kind of intellectual vacuum — it dominates partly because it is being driven by powerful government agencies which are backed up by the rule of law, but partly because there is no confident vision of English being offered as an alternative....

... [T]he Chair of the National Association for the Teaching of English, in her review of the 1998 Conference, described a list of key concerns that had been raised...
These concerns were:

- the relationship between the English curriculum and its assessment
- the balance between centralized prescription and autonomy
- the difference between "literacy" and English
- co-operation and competitiveness

In addressing these concerns, [she] acknowledges the diversity of responses, even from within such a special group as NATE members-who-attend-conferences...There is no consensus. The attractive and once dominant view from English specialists in England that prescription meant slavery is no longer the orthodoxy. At the end of the century there is no dominant view, and in the absence of one, the emphasis on systematic teaching, on structures and frameworks, is introduced with increasingly less resistance.... In the new realism, NATE members are encouraged to be the OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) Inspectors, and the staff-development sessions on the literacy hour and the teaching of grammar are run by NATE itself. In practice, the regulatory model has won. Whether this translates into what the vocabulary of this model calls significant *outcomes* is something we shall have to wait and see.

Excerpt from Peel, Gerlach and Patterson, "Conclusion: A Moral Subject Without Principles," *Questions of English*, Routledge: London (forthcoming 1999).

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Literacy, public policy and the problematic role of government: A panel

Faith Schullstrom, Executive Director of the National Council of Teachers of English (US), opened a panel discussion by providing a US context. She spoke about being in the midst of a paradigm shift. Contrast Kennedy taking 8 days before commenting on the Berlin Wall with today's 12-minute news cycle: this, along with other trends, Schullstrom says, has an impact on literacy.

When distance means nothing, our sense of community changes. We might know nothing about the people next door, yet have close friends only on e-mail. Changes in the economy have lead to a commodification of knowledge. As well, we are now expected to educate 80% of the population to the level where we previously took 20%.

In the US, with its diverse population, internal politics have been characterized by tax revolts, gun violence, and pursuit of instant gratification. Economic fears and shifts of power have created a sense of lost control and a fear to do anything for the common good. Policy-wise, it has also lead to the creation of rules to try "to maintain what was or what they thought was." At a time when the need to educate all and provide public access to learning has never been greater, educators have to face all the previous challenges, plus new ones, with dwindling resources.

Schullstrom closed by adding that today the "greatest conversations are about the things that go on outside the classroom."

Anne Barnes, President of the UK National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE), presented a balanced perspective on her government's new literacy strategy which targets Primary schools and Key Stages 1 and 2, ages 5 - 11. She credits the Labour government with having set up many discussions and enlivened the debate, but does worry about some of the consequences of well-intentioned policies.

The Literacy Hour, she says, is "almost an example of good practice," what most teachers have been doing for years.

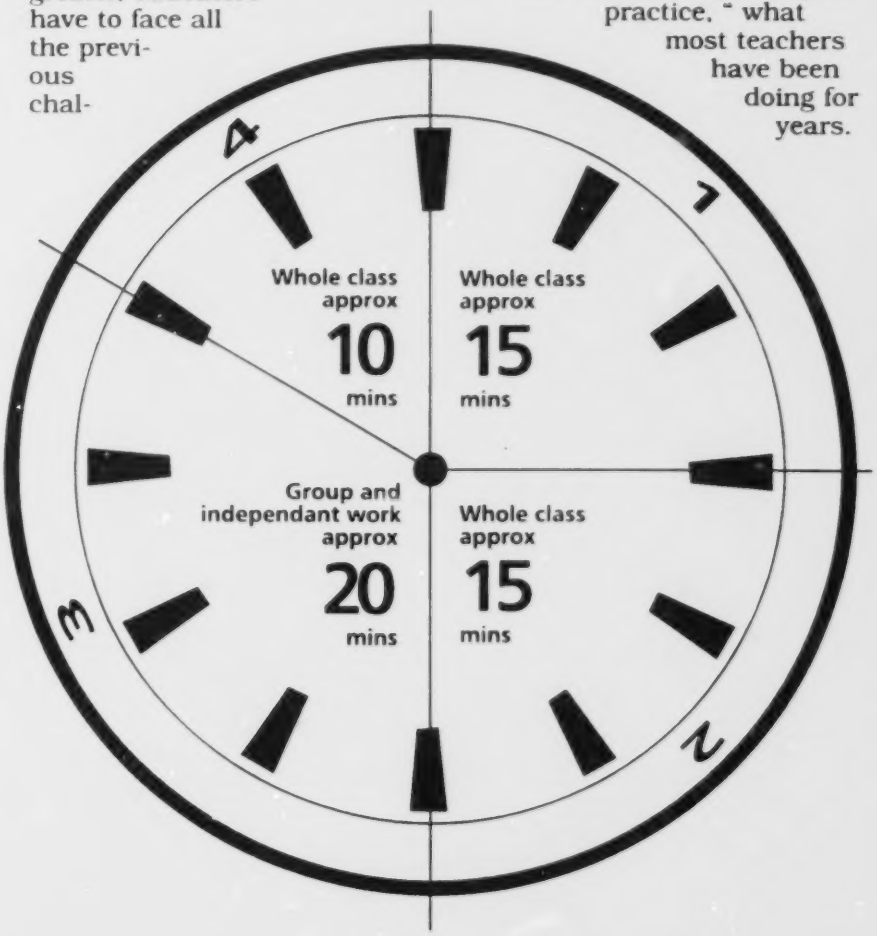
Structure of the Literacy Hour (key stages 1& 2)

1) KS1 and KS2
Shared text work (a balance of reading and writing)

2) KS1
Focused word work
KS2
A balance over the term of focused word work or sentence work

3) KS1
Independant reading, writing or word work, while the teacher works with at least **two** ability groups each day on guided text work (reading and writing).
K22
Independant reading, writing or word work, while the teacher works with at least **one** ability groups each day on guided text work (reading and writing).

4) KS1 and KS2
Reviewing, reflecting, consolidating teaching points, and presenting work covered in the lesson



The difference is that now all teachers will be doing it every day, keeping to a plan. It does focus teachers' minds on what they are doing, and has had a wonderful effect on publishers who have been producing books of shared readings.

However, while the Hour is not statutory, therefore not required, the impression has been conveyed to teachers that they have to do it. Most teachers, she notes, are convinced they have been told what to do; there is no doubt that some planning has been taken out of teachers' hands.

The goal of the literacy strategy is to get all children to Level 10, and tests will be administered regularly to monitor progress, with school results published. Barnes says recent research has shown that these tests are not necessarily reliable using only external markers and no teacher input. Tests are becoming narrower and more obvious, and as might be expected, teachers are doing more "teaching to the test." Barnes concludes," As soon as you start valuing only what you can assess, you've lost it."

Controlling the subject: National Curriculum for Teacher Training courses

Rather than attacking the new policy for its shortcomings, two presenters — Robin Peel, University of Plymouth and Ruth Merttens, College of St. Mark and St. John— both of whom work in teacher training, chose to engage in a Socratic dialogue in which they alternated positions on one of the questions they believe underlies the new policy:

"Can we have structure without prescription and organization without bureaucracy?"

Excerpts from their dialogue illustrate the dynamics of the problem:

FOR The New Policy:
25 years of Progressive Education have not worked for working class kids who still cannot read, write or express themselves adequately as supported by statistics from the Basic Skill Agency which show declining levels of literacy for younger people. There has been a wide variety of pedagogical styles with no control over quality or outcomes. These "invisible children" are an enduring reminder of social-class issues in British education. The new policy seeks to redress this injustice.

AGAINST The New Policy:
This is a familiar argument dating back to the 19th century when Dames Schools were replaced by the monitorial system with its rewards, on-task rigidity and regulation. This system was supposedly "fail-safe." With specific lessons to follow, word-by-word, step-by-step, the teacher was a robot. Dickens satirized the monitorial system in *Hard Times*' Mr. Gradgrind. The new policy is remarkably similarto that system.

FOR The Literacy Hour:
Some teachers are not as inventive or creative as others. The National Curriculum gives this practice the weight of authority, and many teachers welcome guidelines and professional validation.
Foucault reminded us that the absence of regulation is every bit as oppressive as regulation.

AGAINST The Literacy Hour:
The Literacy Hour embodies the monitorial system's step-by-step structure. It distrusts teachers. Even if it is not mandatory, when a school is inspected and not doing well, questions will be asked. Does it work? We have no evidence that it does.

The new proposal unfortunately assumes teaching as an unproblematic system, as a science, when it is more an art. Like cooking, while there are recipes, there has to be allowance for style and tone. Different kinds of people make good teachers. Beside knowledge, teaching involves continuing encounters between the self and others, and sensitive manipulation of events moment by moment; it is highly contextual. The interaction between teacher and student is critical. That cannot be prescribed. [LS]

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1 On education and testing

At best, the tests are a waste of money. Measuring the richness of learning by giving a standardized test is like judging chili by counting the beans. Yet somewhere along the way, we stopped thinking of test scores as a tool and started thinking of them as a goal.

In Illinois, so much rides on these scores — from local property values to the long-term funding schools receive from the state — that teachers are encouraged to teach the tests rather than the knowledge and skills the tests are supposed to measure. For example, scoring well on the "language arts" arts exam has nothing to do with writing critically or creatively; it has everything to do with writing by the numbers. According to the [state test] writing format, the first paragraph of an essay must do this, this, this, and this. The three main body paragraphs must do that, that, that, and that. The conclusion paragraph must begin with two this's followed by three that's and end with an exciting this. These are just the rules for a persuasive essay. There are different rules for writing expository and narrative essays.

The kids hate it. The best writers especially hate it. This is not how people write; it is how they fill out tax forms. "Mr. Ferri?" my students ask." What if we want to tell our story a different way?" I explain that our state legislature decided we must have standards of instruction. The children stare at me. I tell them about basics of form, that once mastered, can be improvised upon. They keep staring. Finally, I say, "Look, neither of us has a choice about this: I have to give you this test, you have to take it, and some poor soul in North Carolina has to read and grade 500 of them a day. The graders don't care what you write; they only care about the rules. If you don't follow the rules, they lower your score. The scores are printed in the newspaper. If they're bad, people will think our school is bad and they won't want to move here, which will make the real estate people mad, and they will yell at the school board, who will yell at the superintendent, who will yell at the principal, who will yell at me. This is not about writing, it is about not getting yelled at." This they understand.

Excerpt from a March 31, 1998 radio commentary on WBEZ in Chicago by Daniel Ferri, a sixth grade Illinois teacher, and reprinted as an essay in *Harper's*, July 1998, pp. 20 - 21.

2 On computers and a 'ritual' view of communication

Because these machines are seen as 'linking' machines ...they inherently affect the ways we think of linking up to each other, and thus they fit squarely into our concerns about society. Media technologies that have largely been tied to the 'transportation' view of communication ... were developed to overcome space and time. But ... the computer used for communication is a technology to be understood from the 'ritual' view of communication, for once time and space have been overcome (or at least rendered surmountable) the spur for development is connection, linkage. Once we can surmount time and space and 'be' anywhere, we must choose a 'where' at which to be, and the computer's functionality lies in its power to make us organise our desires about the spaces we visit and stay in.

S. Jones, *CyberSociety: Computer-mediated Communications and Community*, London: Sage, 1995, p.32, quoted in Abbott, "Young People and the Internet," *digital diversions: Youth Culture in the Age of Multimedia*, edited by Julian Sefton-Green, (London: UCL Press) 1998, p.87.

3 On shifting patterns of reading in Hungary

According to the data collected in 1978 from a representative sample of the adult population [in Hungary] as part of a study of the sociology of reading, one fifth of the most recent material read were nonfiction information useful in daily life. The data from 1995 showed that the nonfiction reading had increased; about one third of the books recently read were nonfiction. The scope of this material ranges from cookbooks to computer literature, from formerly banished recollections to macroeconomics analyses.

This increase indicates that, following the social changes of the last 20 years, fiction has lost its attraction as the hidden political function, the "secret talk," the system of allusions and hints. The world of allegories has become less important. Now things can be called by their names and studied objectively, and the demand for factual information has increased greatly.

Attila Nagy, "Changes in the reading culture in Hungary: Absolute deterioration, relative improvement," *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 40:7 (April 1997), p.575.

Technology and basic skills in the workplace

Florence Rodriguez (R.) with her sister at The Learning Experience Centre.

There are many models for using technologies for learning in the workplace. Some of them tend to be narrow and mechanical, but the potential to be individualized and responsive is fulfilled in some places.

Manitoba has a particularly strong program to support basic skills upgrading in the workplace. It's notable for the relatively small amount of government funding and the strong partnership from business and unions. It looks as if it has achieved what few have— sustainability.

Greg Maruca, Manager of UNITE's Local 459, participated in the 1998 Summer Institute highlighting the Learning Experience Centre that his union has established in Winnipeg. [See Haney article, p. 9]. He reacted vehemently against some rigid workplace learning models that had been presented before he spoke; his passion agitated a few participants, but inspired more. Several of the final evaluations suggested that Greg's words rekindled some old sparks.

Visiting the Learning Experience Centre in October, I found that Greg had not exaggerated. As a veteran of program visits, I know something good when I see it. This Centre, in an old office building in downtown Winnipeg is not glitzy — the furniture is old, the floor covering is frayed, but the energy in the rooms is electric. On Saturday morning by 10 a.m., every computer station is occupied by a UNITE member while Coordinator Ann Haney moves quietly around the room stopping to help — only if asked. By the afternoon, whole families have arrived and children are supervised by a volunteer to listen to stories, play games, write, or bake cookies while their parents have a few hours of uninterrupted work time on their learning programs. When I leave at 3:30, I share the elevator with two beaming families; the children are carrying their drawings and cookies, the parents are taking their notebooks and manuals.

Meet Florence Rodriguez

Florence Rodriquez is the President of UNITE Local 459. She is a petite soft-spoken woman who never expected to be the president of her union. But when a co-worker candidate ran on a platform that suggested ending support for the Learning Experience Centre, a group of workers who had become Centre users recruited Florence to run against her. As one of the first and most dedicated users, Florence accepted and won by a large majority. The centrepiece of her platform was keeping The Centre viable.

Since then, she has become the editor of the union newsletter with some of her articles being reproduced in UNITE's national newsletter. Her husband, who never quite understood what she was doing at The Centre, dropped in one day, and now spends every Saturday upgrading his computer skills. I met him on the day I visited, along with her sister.

Florence has recently won a community award for her participation in United Way fundraising, but her longstanding campaign against child labour has brought her even more recognition. Florence composed words and music and recorded a haunting song about the subject; it was launched on NALD's learner site this fall.[LS]

For information on Workplace Education Manitoba, contact Sue Turner, Manitoba Adult Literacy and Continuing Education, 417-185 Carlton Street, Winnipeg, MN Canada, A3C 3J1; Tel.: (204) 945-1682; Fax: (204) 945-1792; E-mail: sturner@edu.gov.mb.ca

Their web site and Florence Rodriquez' song can be accessed through NALD: www.nald.ca

UNITE's Learning Experience Centre

by Ann Haney, Coordinator, Learning Experience Centre

In 1996, a joint project between UNITE and the Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC) called Communication Barriers to Union Participation, showed a need for worker education related to essential communication skills as used in the workplace, home or community. In response, UNITE and WEMSC opened the Learning Experience Centre in Local 459's office space. The goal of the Centre is to provide essential skill training for UNITE members and their families which will enable them to function more efficiently in their present jobs as well as to access other positions within the workplace.

With the union, the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) co-funded a pilot project called The Integrated Learning Pilot Project: Strategies for Implementing Computer Usage Alongside Communication Skills. The results of that project have become an integral part of the Learning Experience Centre's approach.

Unions themselves are finding that lack of communication skills are a significant barrier to union participation and a worker's well-being in the workplace and the community. Short term programs have proven to be inadequate in addressing this need. The Learning Experience Centre is founded on a more holistic and long-term approach with permanent union funding supplemented by short-term government grants for specific developmental aspects. It addresses the needs of the membership while strengthening the future of Local 459.

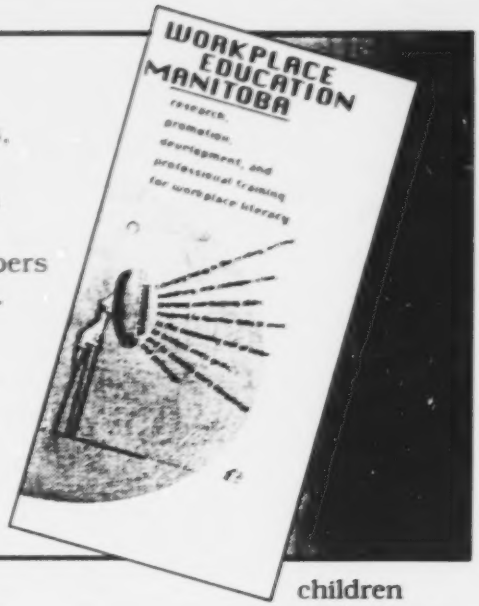
The Integrated Learning Approach provides a uniquely integrative learning experience that focuses on individualized learner needs, while targeting the essential skills of communication and computer.

There are several spin-offs which also benefit Local 459. For example, the union newsletter is now the responsibility of the Centre. Union members themselves are also free to use the Centre and its equipment and the expertise of the facilitators to make work-related or personal things like posters, cards, etc. On Saturday afternoons, members come with their families; the children read, play on computers, bake, draw, paint, while the parents work on their own learning programs.

The Integrated Learning Approach provides a uniquely integrative learning experience that focuses on individualized learner needs,

UNITE

The Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) 459 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, has approximately 1200 members from 15 garment factories. One of the union's significant issue is the limited or non-existent access its members have to educational opportunities in the workplace.



Principles of the program

There are several underlying principles which contribute strongly to the structure and delivery of the program.

- **Priority-Skill Needs**

While the program provides communication practice through whole or small group work it also addresses each individual's priority-skill needs. These are determined through ongoing confidential interviews with each learner which allows the instructor to profile the learner's experience and to prioritize "priority-skill needs." The learner and instructor can agree on some initial learning goals; this process lays the groundwork for ongoing discussion, review and goal setting. It provides a common language for the learner and instructor to discuss the program.

- **Multi-skills and Multi-levels**

Flexibility is a key element. An instructor should tailor each class to the competency level

A Saturday morning at The Learning Experience Centre.

Ann Harey (L.) with a member-turned volunteer waiting to supervise children baking.

of the group and each individual by providing a range of exercises which learners can access according to their needs. At the same time, it is important for the instructor to ensure interaction amongst class members as this provides essential practice in communication skills. Each class and each activity within it should be viewed as potentially addressing many skills at many levels.

• Integration

While there are a number of targeted communication and computer skills, the intent of the program is not to view them discretely but always to see them as being integrated with content that is union, workplace or learner appropriate. For example, this means that an exercise may address good sentence structure, formatting in Word 97 (bold, underline, italic, etc), using content on handling change in the workplace. Whether customized for learner need or drawing on the variety of choices developed by this program, any exercise is approached from this viewpoint.

Members take charge

The Centre is now in its third year, and there is a notable change in the participants' approach to registration and participation. Students are voluntarily making changes in their lives to accommodate the class schedule, whereas when we started, we altered class schedules to accommodate their needs. We are still very flexible in the way we run the Centre and its programs, but i is now truly a partnership. Members are taking more responsibility in running the Centre by assisting in the classes and recruiting students. More and more students are moving into better paying jobs. As well, students who volunteer in the classes learn about the program and become facilitators. One student who attended the first class continued on as a volunteer, became an assistant and then became an instructor creating integrated learning activities using relevant content material. Recently, I received a telephone call from an employer doing a reference check on this instructor for a job working on software development.

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Networking in the UK

When Wordsworth rented Dove Cottage at Grasmere in the 1790s, it had been unoccupied for several years because the rent of £8/year was extravagant beyond the dreams of the neighbouring farmers whose average income was £16/year. But Wordsworth and Coleridge had deep sympathy for the working man, and most of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) was written at Dove Cottage or nearby. It was somehow fitting for the Workplace Basic Skill Training Network to hold their third international seminar in the Lake District at the hotel now opposite Dove Cottage on the edge of Lake Grasmere.

The setting is as tranquil and inspiring to a modern visitor as it must have been to the Romantic poets; sheep still graze in enclosures beside the lake, slate-roofed buildings in the village have been turned into fashionable boutiques for the tourists who apparently overrun the district in the summer. But in early December, the streets are empty, and the rates are low. I was the sole listener to the taciturn guide on a tour of Dove Cottage during a lunch break.

Participants from workplace projects in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland appreciated meeting in a beautiful place, a stark contrast to the dingy surroundings in which many of them spend their days, making them kindred spirits with most adult literacy and basic skill workers in North America.

With support from the British Council and Enterprise Cumbria, I participated in the seminar, discussing programs and issues in Canada, and learning about the similarities and differences between our countries. One major difference is that adult provision is statutory in the UK, meaning that some effort must be made by government to offer courses and programs. However, while I have seen many exemplary programs on past visits, it was clear from listening to presenters that, like most international visitors, I had been shown the best, and that much of what we read in

... changes in funding policy ... were supposed to increase access as part of the government's Widening Participation agenda.

Workplace Basic Skills Training NETWORK

articles and brochures is far removed from the realities of most practitioners. In fact, several times during the conference, I could have been in Canada or the US; in the UK, they also face problems of access, of support, and of mismatches between resources and need.

One presenter from the Further Education Funding Council, responsible for Further Education Colleges, traced the development of the current system and discussed changes in funding policy which were supposed to increase access as part of the government's Widening Participation agenda. But according to several participants, the policy is not translating into reality. The funders never expected such huge numbers to come forward and had not allocated sufficient funds.

There were also concerns about rigid testing and program requirements that do not take account of learners, especially the ESOL students who cannot learn English quickly enough to master complex content simultaneously.

The Workplace Basic Skill Training Network (formerly the WildebeeST Network), began several years ago as an informal group to link those working at all levels in workplace literacy projects. It is coordinated by Fiona Frank out of The Centre for the Study of Education and Training (CSET) at Lancaster University, as part of CSET's support for professional development in education. As membership has grown, the Network is formalizing its structure to ensure that it can serve its members more effectively and expand on its current initiatives. [See BOX.] They have made strong connections internationally in the last three years to help members "avoid reinventing the wheel," according to Frank. The Network is coordinating a five-country European project called ALPHALINK which will link workplace literacy students via the Internet using the New Reading Disc.

There is great openness to sharing at the Network. On the first evening of the conference, a group of us returned after dinner and sat until 1:00 a.m. exploring in NALD. Bonnie Dudley-Edwards from Edinburgh, who is working on a project about adult competencies, said she was going to be visiting NALD every day. Sure enough, arriving at a NALD meeting a few days later, I found Bonnie on-line, saying hello and asking for directions to the NIFL site and the Equipped for the Future project. [LS]

Information: Fiona Frank, Coordinator, Workplace Basic Skill Training Network, CSET, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL
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NIACE, 21 De Montfort Street Leicester, LE1 7GE, England.

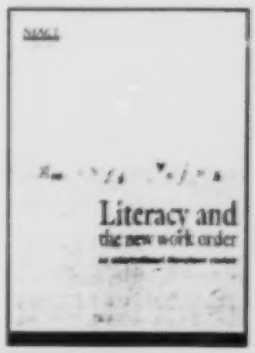
Workplace Basic Skills Training NETWORK

Workplace Basic Skill Training Network Initiatives

These include:

- Developing *Breaking Down Barriers, Certificate in Workplace Basic Skill Training*, for ABE tutors, available through NIACE (the National Organization for Adult Learning).
- Running an online course for workplace tutors on Using the Internet
- Producing *Literacy and the New Work Order*, by Chris Holland, with Fiona Frank and Tony Cooke, an International Literature Review on Workplace Literacy, available through NIACE.

Web site: www.lans.ac.uk/alpha



The Network is coordinating a five-country European project called ALPHALINK which will link workplace literacy students via the Internet using the 'New Reading Disc'.

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Healthy weight: A workshop plan

*[The excerpts here are reprinted with permission from a workshop plan in **Learning for our Health, A resource for participatory literacy and health education,** by Mary Norton and Pat Campbell, The Learning Centre Literacy Association, Edmonton, Canada, 1998, pp. 54- 58. The book guides facilitators on participatory practice and provides plans for 10 workshops on health-related subjects. The plans were built around a group of women at the Learning Centre who are referred to here as "the women," but the plan is usable in many settings. [See p. 19 for a review and ordering instructions.]*

Start with experience

"I have tried everything. I tried diet pills. I tried to starve myself a little bit.

"I asked my doctor how to lose weight and he told me to quit eating."

"Every time I diet, it seems like I eat more and gain more weight."

Mary Norton and Pat Campbell, The Learning Centre, Edmonton

A number of women were concerned about being overweight. This workshop started with a discussion of healthy and unhealthy weight loss diets. We then talked about our relationships with food and shared and analyzed our desires to lose weight. Finally, we explored emotional and physical reasons for eating and listed alternatives to overeating.

While some women at the Learning Centre had health concerns related to their weight, a number were mainly concerned with how they looked. For this reason, we introduced an analysis about social attitudes and body image. Women in some of the field tests sites were from countries where attitudes about body weight differed from prevailing ones in Canada. In these cases, the analysis went in different directions. Some women described how relatives who had lived in Canada for longer than them were starting to comment on their weight.

We started this workshop with discussion about weight loss diets because this is the way the women had introduced the topic. For this workshop, we used prompts that are a little "outside" women's personal experiences. This allowed us to talk about weight loss approaches without having to name unhealthy ways that we may have used to lose weight, unless we wanted to. With some people, you might omit the discussion about diet and start with a reading of the handout **Fat people are not blind** (page 59) [This handout is a letter to Ann Landers reproduced in the book with permission for workshop use only.]

-prompt-
interviews about diets
or **a selection of women's magazines**

Before this workshop, some women interviewed family and friends about their attempts to lose weight. They reported the responses and added other ideas.

Ways to lose weight

- Get advice from a doctor	- Stop eating
- Don't eat in the night	- Diet pills
- Eat salads	-Throw up your food
– Cut out fat and sugar	-Slim fast

Women then talked about whether each way to lose weight was healthy or unhealthy and why. We used the handout **How to spot an unhealthy diet** (page 58) to confirm and add to ideas. As an alternative, women might cut out ads and articles about weight loss diets, then sort them into healthy and unhealthy ways to lose weight.

how to spot
an unhealthy diet

1. Does the diet include pills or "nutritious" drink or a secret formula?
2. Does the diet focus only on one or a few foods (e.g., grapefruit)?
3. Does the diet leave out some food groups?
4. Does the diet promise you will lose more than 2 pounds a week?
5. Does the diet promise you will lose weight without having to excercise?
6. Does the diet promise it will "melt away fat" or that you can "eat all you want"?
7. Does the diet tell you to eat fewer than 1200 calories per day?

Example of handout on page 58

Resources

Breen, M. *Taking care: A handbook about women's health.* Toronto, ON:McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1991.

The chapter "Controlling your weight" considers good and bad reasons to lose weight and approaches to weight loss. Information about eating disorders is included.

Eating right. (For your information). Syracuse,NY: New Readers Press, 1994.

The chapter "Weight control" outlines some steps to lose weight. A brief discussion of eating disorders is included.

-prompt-

Fat people are not blind (Handout, page 58)

Reading this handout together prompted women to recall their own feelings about weight and weight loss.

2 Build on Analyze experience

"I know I'm overweight and that's why I have trouble with my legs."

-prompt-

"Good reasons to lose weight" and
"Bad reasons to lose weight" in *Taking Care*, pp. 148- 150

Women talked about why they wanted to lose weight. Discussion touched upon weight and its connections to self-esteem, depression, and health in general. Then, one small group read "Good reasons to lose weight" and the other read about the bad reasons. Each group reported on what they read.

-prompt-

body image exercise

We asked women to stand up and notice how many of us were wearing loose, baggy clothing and how many were standing with our arms crossed in front of us. We talked about how our clothing and posture are partially determined by whether we are accepting or critical of our bodies.

We talked about how our body image is how we see ourselves. This is influenced by what society expects along with our emotional state. If a woman does not measure up to society's unrealistic standard of beauty, such as thinness, she may have a negative body image. A serious consequence of a negative body image is an eating disorder such as anorexia or bulimia. It's nearly impossible to change how society perceives beauty, but we can change how we think about our bodies.

[*One more prompt was about body image affecting our quality of life.*]

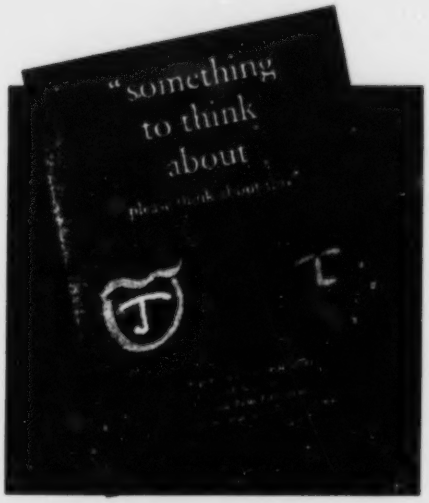
3 Plan for action

A number of women did want to lose weight for health reasons. So, we talked about whether we tended to eat more at certain times and why. After listing reasons, women made a list of activities to do instead of eating

The workshop on exercise and eating patterns helped women identify other ways to lose weight.

'Something to think about: please think about this'

Report on a National Study of Access to Adult Basic Education Programs and Services in Canada.
prepared and written by Susan Hoddinott. (Ottawa Board of Education: Ottawa)1998. 212 pp.
ISBN 0-9684367-0-6
reviewed by Linda Shohet



This review is a supplement to the front page which describes what this study set out to do and what it accomplished. A well-written and exquisitely presented book, it indicts this country for its continued lack of provision for adult basic students. With many years experience in the field, both on the ground and as an academic researcher, Susan Hoddinott has looked at it from both sides now, and in this book, she calls things by their name.

The one name that puzzled me was a return to the word "Illiteracy" in the first chapter entitled "Adult Illiteracy in Canada: Toward an

Selected teacher recommendations for adult basic education

Global policy recommendations
- We need much more than a few poorly funded sporadic programs ...
- We must take a look at the issue of undereducated adults in Canada from more than an educational perspective.
- We must dare to examine the issue of undereducated adults from an educational perspective.

Funding
- Funding for Adult Basic Education programs must be stable.

Student: Teacher ratio/stability of classes:
- ...that a student: teacher ratio of 1:12 constitute the base standard for Literacy classes [and that] a reduction in student numbers during a semester ... not constitute a sufficient reason for closing a class.

Services and supports:
- Adult Basic Education programs must have good quality, affordable day care facilities, parking, easily accessible transit, and personal counselors on site.
- ...financial aid be used to pay transportation costs, child care costs, school materials, extracurricular activities and extra expenses incurred in the purchase of clothing.
- ...an increasing need for pronunciation remediation with New Canadian Adult Basic Education students.

Links to other programs/student transitions
- Education and training services to adults must be coordinated and connected so that a natural and purposeful progression occurs from Adult Basic Education into a secondary school program and/or a post-secondary or job skills training program.

Time allowed to complete the program
- that Literacy students no longer be constrained to completing their education within a limited period...

Materials and resources:
- ... that teachers have access to a wide assortment of learning materials that span different learning levels and cover a wide range of learning needs
- ...crucial that these resources be geared to adult learners

Teacher qualifications and professional development:
- ... important for teachers of adults to supplement their teacher training with further instruction specific to the needs of adult learners and an andragogical approach to teaching and learning.
- ... recognize that instructors have life experience that counts towards the development of their profession. This is not to say that it is a "free-for-all" and that anyone can teach Literacy. Absolutely not. There must be the development of a set of standards... which will apply to anyone teaching Literacy.

Source: *"Something to think about: please think about this."*

Understanding of the Issue." With the broadening definition of "literacy" as a continuum of abilities and the move away from the "great divide" theory, why would a thoughtful researcher choose to return to the older word? I could not reach Susan to ask, but did have a conversation with Joyce White who recently retired from the Ottawa Carlton Board, but administered this project before leaving.

Joyce confirmed that it was partly to reignite a sense of what we are discussing which the researchers felt has somehow been lost in the "redefinition" process. The problem of undereducation as a public issue in Canada has been eclipsed while media and campaigns focus on individuals. Hoddinott argues that partial realities have been generalized to stereotypes and left unquestioned. Among these are the generalizations that most "illiterates" are too ashamed to admit it and join a program; that bad memories of initial schooling have made them forever averse to formal education; and that if programs are made available, no one comes. But, she says, national campaigns in the UK and the US showed those assumptions to be false. Many undereducated adults come forward when they believe the options for education exist. As long as our society demands credentials for jobs, those who want to get ahead cannot make it through ad hoc, short-term, unaccredited programs.

The reflections of the teachers and students enrich this study. It is rare to hear voices in policy analyses — they give it a human dimension and remind us that policy ultimately touches us where we live.

The reflections of the teachers and students enrich this study. It is rare to hear voices in policy analyses — they give it a human dimension and remind us that policy ultimately touches us where we live.

Something to think about is the final report of a national study. The first phase report, *To Meet a Significant Need*, was published in 1996. This phase built on their findings and related them to the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education (1997).

Not to be entirely hopeless, the researchers asked the teachers in the study to "Imagine how things could be different." They end the book with the teachers' recommendations. These were organized under ten headings: *global policy recommendations; funding; facilities and resources; scheduling; students; teacher ratio/stability of classes; services and supports; links to other programs/student transitions; time allowed to complete the programs; materials and resources; and teacher qualifications and professional development.* Although we have probably heard most of them before, since they are still far from being reality, it is worth looking at a selection of them again [See BOX, p. 15].

This is also not the first study to uncover this reality. Richard Darville reached similar conclusions in a 1991 Statistics Canada study* using a more traditional research method and presenting in a less attractive format. Perhaps this time we are ready to respond.

* *Statistics Canada (1991). Adult literacy in Canada: Results of a national study. Ottawa, ON: Catalogue no. 89-525-XPE.*

ANNOUNCEMENT

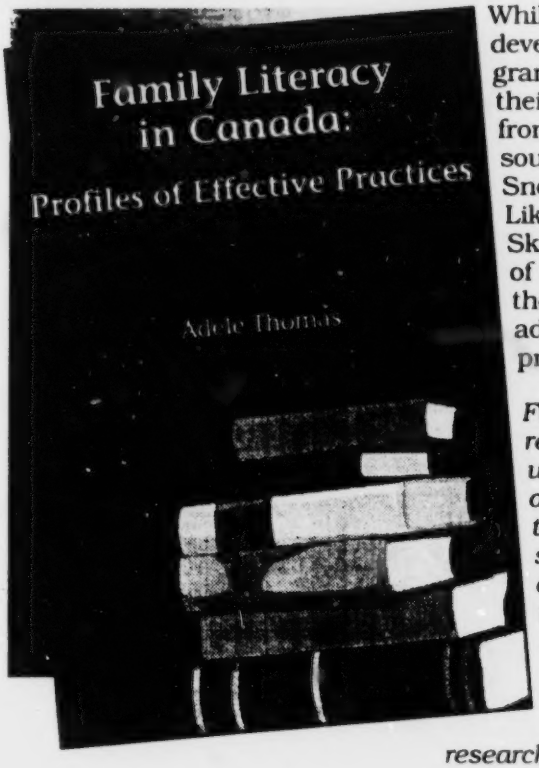
Valuing literacy in Canada: A new research agenda

The National Literacy Secretariat of Human Resources Development Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) announced on December 21, a new joint initiative to fund strategic research into adult literacy issues. The two organizations will contribute equal shares for a total of $2.5 million over five years.

Information: Margaret Robinson, Human Resources Development Canada, National Literacy Secretariat, (819) 953-5677; http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Maynard Collins, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, (613) 992-5145; http://www.nald.sshrc.ca

Family Literacy in Canada: Profiles of Effective Practices,

edited by Adele Thomas, (Editions Soleil: Welland, ON) 1998, 183 pp. ISBN 0-921831-62-5.
reviewed by Linda Shohet



This is another of the books profiling effective practices. Although "practices" may be easier to replicate than "programs," I have a strong and growing bias against the genre because I believe that they contribute to our mistaking parts for the whole; they give a false impression that a particular type of intervention is widely and well practiced in the country, when in truth many of these programs are the result of a strong leader with vision, commitment, good community connections and funding savvy, and their sustainability is subject to the vagaries of politics or an administrator's good will.

This collection is among the best of its kind. Editor Adele Thomas has focused on some thoughtful and diverse models from across Canada as presented by the program directors/coordinators themselves, much of it descriptive and anecdotal.

That concern aside, this collection is among the best of its kind. Editor Adele Thomas has focused on some thoughtful and diverse models from across Canada as presented by the program directors/coordinators themselves, much of it descriptive and anecdotal. The most useful chapter, however, is not one of the program descriptions, but the "Overview of Perspectives on Family Literacy: Research and Practice" co-authored by Thomas and Sharon Skage. It is an up-to-date survey of current research with a clear presentation of the four dominant models of family literacy. It tracks the history of the concept, acknowledges the complexity and the unanswered questions, but makes a strong case for its potential in addressing many of the literacy needs of our population. If I were teaching a course on adult literacy, this chapter would be required.

While the authors trace the development of these programs in Canada, most of their research is drawn from American and British sources, from Taylor to Snow and Purcell-Gates. Like others, Thomas and Skage also note the dearth of Canadian research and the ad hoc nature of most adult literacy programming:

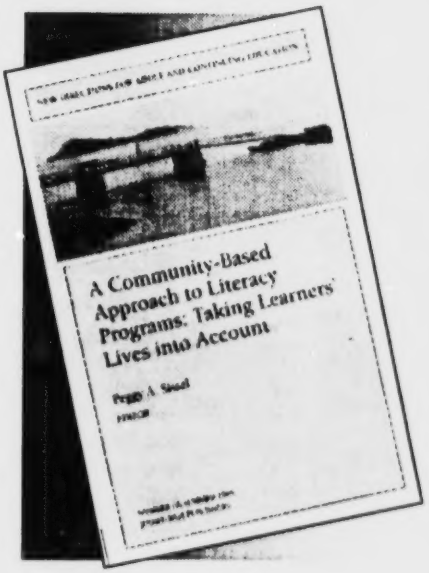
> *Future policy decisions regarding family literacy will increasingly depend on research. Nevertheless, there is no coherent strategy in place for developing a Canadian research base in family literacy. At the present time, program design and practices are only loosely related to a research base, and community-based implementation decisions often appear fragmented. because local program developers have little access to program evaluation results of similar programs.*
> ....
> *Canadian family literacy intervention has been characterized by relatively short-term, low intensity programs...* (pp. 21 -22)

With this perspective as a sub text, and keeping in mind the Canadian imperative that a national study has to include as many of the provinces and territories as possible, the program profiles can be read with greater interest.

A Community-Based Approach to Literacy Programs: Taking Learners' Lives into Account,

edited by Peggy Sissel, New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, Number 70, Summer 1996, (Jossey-Bass: San Francisco), 111 pp.

reviewed by Linda Shohet



For any adult educator struggling in an ever more controlled teaching environment, it restores a sense of possibility to hear the voices in the nine chapters of this collection. Editor Peggy Sissel has invited eight thoughtful practitioner-researchers to write succinct, readable reflections on issues facing community-based literacy practice at the end of the century. Susan Lytle, Hal Beder, Mary Beth Bingman and others share their long experience As in all the Jossey-Bass series, each chapter has clear headings and tight analytical summaries that respect complexity; they are balanced by concrete examples from the field and end with suggested directions for the future.

Topics include prison programs, North American migrant workers education, women in family literacy programs, people with low literacy finding their way through the health care system, and an analysis of popular education practices and challenges.

I want to single out Sondra Cuban and Elisabeth Hayes' "Women in Family Literacy Programs: A Gendered Perspective" and Hal Beder's "Popular Education: An Appropriate Educational Strategy for Community-Based Organizations."

Cuban and Hayes address several aspects of issues about women and literacy, laying bare many of the assumptions about women underlying most Family Literacy programs. Essentially they argue that most of these programs ignore the needs or interests of women for their own learning and focus on the needs of children. Women, they claim, are seen primarily as "conduits of literacy." The programs devalue women's home literacy practices and try to introduce school-like learning practices in the house. There is an assumption that less-educated mothers are a risk to their children, and the economic goal of many family literacy programs may give women the conflicting expectations "of finding employment and leaving welfare at the same time as spending more time and energy at home reading to their children." They suggest, alternatively, that these programs will have overcome gender bias only when they allow women to explore a full range of options for their lives, when fathers and other male members of the community are involved in children's education, and when the women have broader educational opportunities made available through these programs.

Hal Beder has written a chapter that can stand as primer or introduction to popular education for someone who is not quite sure what it is or who has seen the term trivialized and co-opted by traditional institutions. Beder begins with a personal memory of his own introduction to and early bewilderment with some of Freire's work in the1970s. He captures the essence of popular education as "three essential and integrated components that separate it from other adult education methodologies: praxis, a collective and participatory orientation, and action." he goes on to describe each in detail, with examples, and includes a section on "How to do it." But he concludes with a series of threats and challenges that cannot be ignored. Among these are the contradictions between the demands of many funding agencies for accountability and incorporation and the essential popular education process of collective decision-making. Another is the lack of time to engage in collective critical reflection because we are so busy reacting to crises and daily demands. There are more, and, he warns, "none can be resolved through easy or off-the-shelf answers. Such challenges will have to resolved through their praxis."

Peggy Sissel ends the volume with her "Reflection as Vision: Prospects for Future Literacy Programming," integrating ideas from all the contributors.

Orders: Jossey-Bass,Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA, USA 94104-1342.

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Learning for our Health, A resource for participatory literacy and health education.

by Mary Norton and Pat Campbell. The Learning Centre Literacy Association, Edmonton, Canada, 1998, 110 pp. ISBN:0-9698539-6-3
reviewed by Linda Shohet

The Learning Centre Literacy Association
Learning for our Health
A resource for participatory literacy and health education

Learning for our Health demonstrates brilliantly how to do participatory education. The context is a women's group who met in weekly workshops about health in 1996 and 1997 at the Learning Centre, a community-based adult literacy and education centre in Edmonton. It was part of a two-pronged project to integrate literacy and health promotion; the other part involved producing easier-to-read materials.

Mary Norton and Pat Campbell developed the prototype for the program and wrote this resource so others can build on it. An accompanying text called "Getting Together" documents through photostory the experience of the eleven women who met weekly for two hours over eight weeks. *Learning for our Health* is a guide to running a participatory program; it is thoughtful and easy-to-use because of clear writing and superb presentation. The examples come from the women's group.

Part one lays the groundwork for linking literacy and health and describes the principles and practices of participatory education. The writers acknowledge a debt to Rick Arnold's and others' *Educating for a Change*; they borrowed and adapted their 4-stage spiral model: Start with experience; build on/analyze experience; plan for action; and reflect on action. This framework is used in Part two "Ideas for practice" where they discuss setting up workshops, facilitation, resources and activities, integrating language and literacy, and provide workshop plans on 10 subjects including stress, saying no, exercise, healthy weight, menopause, STDs, living with welfare and more. Part three is a list of resources and ordering information. Every workshop plan has its short list of relevant resources. [See In the Classroom, p. 13.]

An added richness comes from the reflective practices modeled by Norton and Campbell themselves. In describing the spiral model, they mention that when they were reading an early draft of the book, there noticed "something missing;" they recognized that the writing had distanced them from the challenges, questions and

Analyze experiences —in practice—
As women, we are aware of the expectations of women and how they shape our own actions and attitudes. When talking about these expectations and attitudes with the health group, we felt comfortable to include ourselves in the "we" of the group.

On the other hand, we both have many of the attributes and circumstances that contribute to health and to power in our society. (For example, we are white, currently economically secure, employed, and have graduate degrees.) As the workshops began to explore issues related to poverty, for instance, we had to face the differences between our social positions and the women's, and to deal with discomfort this caused for us (see the workshop LIVING HEALTHY ON A LOW BUDGET). We were hesitant to use "we" to talk about experiences of the group in that case, and found ourselves using "you" instead. We talked about this with the group, but we need to learn more about how to openly and relevantly discuss differences in social positions and implications.

The women in the Learning Centre group also had different histories and social positions. Because of the importance of the group, there may have been a tendency to overlook differences. We needed to consider differences, not to divide the group, but to relate personal experiences to systemic issues that affect health. *Learning for our Health*, p.14

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struggles. In rewriting, they captured some of the tensions between principles and practice with great sensitivity by adding an indented section called "in practice" below the sections on each stage in the spiral model. For example, after describing what it means to "analyze experiences" and how they did this in the group, they add a comment on situating themselves in relation to the group. [See BOX, p.19]

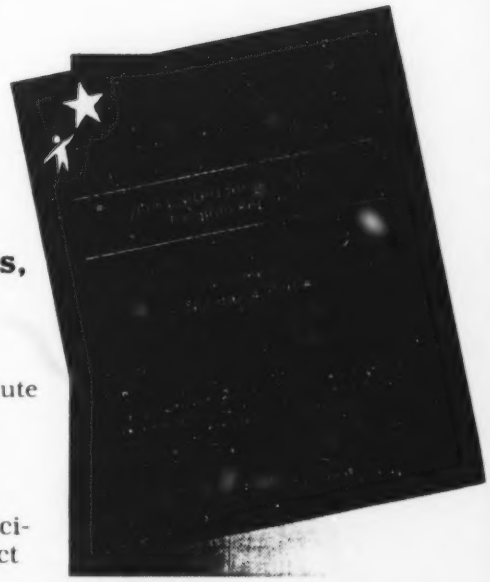
Mary and Pat, two highly intuitive literacy educators, produced this book as part of a project funded by the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) and Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development. I thought of Hal Beder' s observation about the contradiction between the requirements of most funders and the goals of participatory education, and recognized that the NLS is a funder that allows project autonomy. They have supported many exemplary participatory research projects including this one and the study of adult basic skills provision, *Something to Think About."*

The challenge in this country is take these initiatives beyond projects. In places like the Learning Centre, they are already there. This is praxis.

Orders: The Learning Centre Literacy Association, #200 10116 - 105 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, Canada T5H 0K2; Tel.: (780) 429-0675; Fax: (780) 425-2205; E-mail: learningcentre@compusmart.ab.ca

Empowerment Health Education in Adult Literacy: A Guide for Public Health and Adult Literacy Practitioners, Policy Makers and Funders.

by Marcia Drew Hohn, Ed. D., Washington DC: National Institute for Literacy (1998). 151 pp.



reviewed by Linda Shohet

This report describes a participatory action research project on health and adult literacy funded by NIFL in 1996-97. It involved members of a community -based program in Lynn Massachusetts in developing two programs, one a cancer education program for early detection of breast, cervical and testicular cancers, and the other on family violence.

Marcia Drew Hohn, the Director of Northeast SABES (System for Adult Basic Education Support) in Massachusetts, is an adult educator committed to participatory practice. She moderates the NIFL Health and Literacy listserv. In 1996-97, as a Literacy Leader Fellow for the US National Institute for Literacy (NIFL), Hohn designed and conducted the project and wrote the report.

It is thoughtful reading beside the Norton-Campbell resource and also relates to one of the chapters in the Sissel book (p.18). Hohn too grapples with the potential and the cha!-lenges in doing Participatory Action Research, but she takes it several steps further than the Edmonton group when the students take charge. These student-facilitators work with Marcia to develop the components of health education modules for fellow ABE students, and then do the teaching. Some effective practices include collaborating with an empathetic health care worker in dealing with some sensitive issues (self-examination for testicular cancer), and using drama to open up some of these. Hohn gives a rationale for paying students to do this work, a controversial topic in many places when issues of role and authority are challenged.

As a free publication from NIFL, this report has a less polished presentation than the Canadian resource, and a different emphasis as a research report. But the content is equally challenging to traditional literacy educators and to health educators. Hohn questions the focus on compliance and on changing individual behaviour that underlies most health teaching; she suggests that community enhancement and individual empowerment must be goals of both literacy and health education.

Orders: National Institute for Literacy, 800 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #200, Washington, DC 20006; 1-800-228-8813

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New focus on media

The past few months have seen some changes at The Centre in the way we organize our media work. Judy Brandeis, who for seven years put in countless hours as Media Associate and editor of *Media Focus*, found by last year that the demands of her job as Executive Director of LPQ were growing, limiting heavy outside commitments including her work at The Centre. We accepted Judy's departure regretfully; her energy and vision laid the groundwork for media here, in building networks, organizing seminars and writing for the newsletter.

Demands at The Centre have also been increasing as the issues of media and technology merge. The first part of our new strategy was to integrate *Media Focus* with *Literacy Across the Curriculum* to match our philosophy on the inseparability of the two strands. That began with Volume 13 of the newsletter.

Our next step has been to create an international Advisory Panel on Media and Technology inviting a group of 10 - 15 colleagues from across the globe to join, with the request that they submit one article for the newsletter each year. New members will be added until the end of 1999, the target date for a full slate.

We are delighted to announce the membership as of January 1999 [See BOX.]

In this issue, Chris Abbott has contributed his paper on literacy and ICT. (See Working Paper insert).

October 1998: David Dillon, President of The Centre, thanked Judy Brandeis on behalf of the board, for her years of work at The Centre.

Advisory Panel on Media and Technology@The Centre for Literacy

Chris Abbott,
King's College, London

Judy Brandeis
Literacy Partnership of Quebec

David Buckingham
University of London

Barry Duncan,
Founder/past President
Association forMedia Literacy

Winston Emery
McGill University

Gunther Kress
University of London

Robert Kubey
Rutgers University

Len Masterman
University of Liverpool

Barry McMahon
Ministry of Education, Western Australia

John Pungente,
SJ Jesuit Communication Project

Robyn Quin
Edith Cowan University

Literacy and your MP: An LPQ coalition event

On November 5, 1998, for its annual general meeting, Literacy Partners of Quebec (LPQ) organized a panel discussion on the role of federal Members of Parliament in maintaining a policy commitment to literacy.

Panelists were local MPs Marlene Jennings and Clifford Lincoln and Craig McNaughton, Executive Director of the Movement for Canadian Literacy. The panel was moderated by Dennis Trudeau, host of CBC Newswatch and spokesman for the annual Golf Day for Literacy in Quebec.

Panelist Marlene Jennings, M.P.

That evening, winners of the 1998 LPQ Poster Contest which was co-sponsored by the Quebec Home and School Federation were given their certificates. The winning entries have been turned into posters

Continued on page 22

M.P. Clifford Lincoln presents the Secondary Level Award from the LPQ Poster Contest to winner Charlotte Fisher who lives in his riding.

and distributed to schools and literacy organizations. The 1998 LPQ Literacy Award was given to Frances Ackerman, Director of the Fraser-Hickson Library, for her continuing contribution to the community.

Panel on Literacy and your M.P.

Dennis Trudeau, host of CBC Newswatch, moderated panel

Frances Ackerman (l.) accepts the LPQ Literacy Award from President Gillian Di Vito (r.)

Learning disabilities and adult literacy

The Centre has a strong commitment to the issue of learning disabilities because they are so prevalent among adults with literacy problems. Several years ago, in partnership with Learning Associates of Montreal, we ran workshops for parents and teachers, merging the concepts of family literacy, home-school support and early intervention as means of reducing future numbers of adults in need. All the sessions were oversubscribed, and the demand has grown since.

Penny Bloch, from Learning Associates of Montreal, leading a workshop on October 28, 1998, on "Helping learning disabled children learn: A guide for parents and teachers." Participants packed the room.

This year we extended our LD partnerships to include the Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec(LDAQ), Montreal Chapter 1. In October, we jointly offered a series of three workshops, again filling the rooms to capacity. In April 1999, we are planning a follow-up series focused on adolescents and adults. [See Announcement p.30.] Finally, both we and Literacy Partners of Quebec, our co-sponsors of the annual Golf Day for Literacy, have dedicated the proceeds of the 1999 tournament to support subsidized LD assessments for adult literacy/ABE students and to offer specialized training on LD for tutors.(See p. 28.)

Media Education Conferences Quicklist

The Media Studies Conference
June 30 - July 2, 1999
South Bank, London

Summit 2000: Children, Youth and The Media Beyond the Millennium
May 13 - 16, 2000
Toronto, ON

Chronological Conference Listing Local

Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec (LDAQ) 24th Annual International Conference on Learning Disabilities
March 25 - 27, 1999
Montreal, QC
Information: LDAQ.
Tel.: (514) 847-1324;
Fax: (514) 281-5187

Association of Teachers of English (ATEQ)
Springboards '99 Silver Anniversary
April 30, 1999
Montreal, QC

Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL)
"Sustaining our Communities through Learning and Development:
The Challenge for English-speaking Quebec"
April 30 - May 2, 1999
Montreal, QC
Information: QAAL.
Tel.: (514) 848-2036;
Fax: (514) 848-4520

National/International

Technology, Reading and Learning Difficulties 17th Annual International Conference
January 28 - 30, 1999
San Franscisco, CA
Information: Diane Frost;
Tel.: (510) 594-1249;
Fax: (510) 594-1838.

East York-Scarborough Reading Association 23rd Annual Language Arts Conference
February 11 - 12, 1999
Toronto, ON
Information: (416) 444-7473;
Web site:
www.readingfortheloveofit.com

Ontario Council of Teachers of English
February 19, 1999
Toronto, ON
Information: Alex Bostock.
Tel.: (416) 393-5501;
Fax: (416) 393-5631

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development 1999 (ASCD)
March 6 - 8, 1999
San Francisco, CA
Information: ASCD, 1-800-933-2723 or (703) 578-9600.

TESOL '99
March 9 - 13, 1999
New York, NY
Information: (703) 836-0774;
Fax: (703) 836-7864;
E-mail: tesol@tesol.edu;
Web site: www.tesol.edu

Conference on College Composition and Communication (4Cs)
March 24 - 27, 1999
Atlanta, GA
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.
Tel.: (217) 328-3870, ext. 203;
Fax: (217) 328-0977

CAL 99
Virtuality in Education: What are the Future Educational Contexts?
March 28 - 31, 1999
Institute of Education, University of London
Information: Phillipa Orme, CAL 99 Conference Secretariat, 12 Church Street, West Hanney, Wantage, Oxon OX 12 OLN, UK;
Tel.: 011 44 01235 868811;
Fax: 011 44 01235 868811;
E-mail: p.orme@dial.pipex.com
Web site: www.elsevier.nl/locate/cal99

International Conference on Technology and Education (ICTE)
March 29 - 31, 1999
University of Edinburgh
Information: http://www.icte.org/

National Writing Centers Association
Writing Center 2000: Meeting the Challenges of the New Century
April 15 -17, 1999
Bloomington, IN
Information: Ray Smith, Director, Campus Writing Program, Franklin Hall 008, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA 47405.
Tel.: (812) 855-4928;
E-mail: nwca99@indiana.edu

8th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy
April 18 - 20, 1999
Louisville, KY
Information: National Center for Family Literacy, 325 W. Main St., Louisville, KY, USA 40202-4215.
Tel.: (502) 584-1133;
E-mail: ncfl@famlit.org;
Web site: www.famlit.org

10th Reaching for Success: Business and Education Working Together Conference Board of Canada
April 26 - 27, 1999
Toronto, ON
Information: Conference Board of Canada, 1-888-801-8818; Tel.: (613) 526-3280; Fax: (613) 526-4857;
E-mail: scott@conferenceboard.ca;
Web site:
www.conferenceboard.ca/nbec

CONFERENCES

Educational Computing Organization of Ontario (ECOO) 20th Annual Conference
April 29 - May 1, 1999
Toronto, ON
Information:
http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ecoo/

44th Annual Convention International Reading Association
May 2 - 7, 1999
San Diego, CA
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA
Tel.: (302) 731-1600 or (800) 336-READ.

Computers and Advanced Technology in Education (CATE) '99
May 5 - 8, 1999
Philadelphia PA,
Information: International Association of Science and Technology for Development, 1811 West Katella Avenue, #101, Anaheim, CA, USA 92804, Tel.: (714) 778-3230; Fax: (714) 778-5463; E-mail: iasted@iasted.com

Commission on Adult Basic Education (COABE) Conference
May 12 - 15, 1999
San Diego, CA
Information: CCAE State Office, 1006 Fourth Street #260, Sacramento, CA 95814, Tel.: (916) 444-3323;
Web site: www.ccaestate.org

Laubach Canada Annual Conference
May 13 - 16, 1999
Ottawa, ON
Information: Tel.: 1-888-248-2898; Fax: (506) 634-0944;
Web site: www.nald.ca//llc.htm

Workplace Learning: Progress through Innovation
Fourth Annual Conference
May 16 - 18, 1999
Milwaukee, WI
Information: Workplace Learning Conference, Center on Education and Work, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1025 West Johnson Street, Room 964,Madison, WI, USA 53706-1796; Fax: (608) 262-3050.

ICAE Sixth World Assembly
May 16 - 24, 1999
Ocho Rios, Jamaica
includes
Learning for the Millennium
First International Follow-up to CONFINTEA V
May 18 -20, 1999
Information: ICAE, 720 Bathurst Street #500, Toronto, ON, M5S 2R4, Canada, Tel.: (416) 588-1211; Fax: (416) 588-5725; E-mail: icae@web.net

Fourth National Writing Across the Curriculum Conference
"Multiple Intelligences"
June 3 - 5, 1999
Ithaca, NY
Information: Tel.: (607) 255-2955; Fax: (607) 255-2956;
E-mail: wac99-conf@cornell.edu
Web site:
www.arts.cornell.edu/jskwp/wac99.html

1999 Fifth Annual International Conference: Pedagogy & Theatre of the Oppressed
"Re-inventing Freire and Boal from São Paulo to St. Paul"
June 3 – 5, 1999
New York City
Information: Doug Paterson at: paterson@unomaha.edu

Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities
June 2 - 12, 1999
Université de Sherbrooke and Bishop's University
Lennoxville, QC
Information: Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, Humanities and Social Sciences Federation of Canada, 151 Slater Street, # 415, Ottawa, ON, K1P 5H3, Tel.: (613) 238-6112, ext. 312; Fax: (613) 236-4853;
Web site: CONGRESS@HSSFC.CA

Canadian Communication Association Annual Conference
June 6 - 8, 1999
Université de Sherbrooke
Sherbrooke, QC
Information: Roxanne Welters, CCA Liaison Officer, Département de communication, Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succ. Centre-ville, Montréal, QC, H3C 3J7, Tel.: (514) 343-6111, Ext 5434; Fax: (514) 343-2298;
E-mail: acc@com.umontreal.ca

Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE)
1999 conference by satellite hook-up. Date in early June tba
Information: E-mail: cade@csse.ca;
Web site: www.cad-aced.ca

7th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women
June 20 - 26, 1999
Tromso, Norway
Information: Tel.: +47 77 64 58 99;
Fax: +47 77 64 64 20;
E-mail: womens.worlds.99@skk.uit.no
Web site:
www.skk.uit.no/WW99/ww99.html

The Media Studies Conference
June 30 - July 2, 1999
South Bank, London
Information: British Film Institute, Media Studies Conference 1999, Education Department, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 2LN

International Federation of Teachers of English (IFTE)
July 7 - 10, 1999
Warwick, ENGLAND
Information: NATE, 50 Broadfield Rd., Sheffield, S8-OXJ England,
Tel.: (0114) 255-5419;
Fax: (0114) 255-5296

Canadian Education Association
July 8 - 10, 1999
Victoria, BC
Information: Canadian Education Association, Suite 8 - 200, 252 Bloor Street West, Toronto, ON, M5S 1V5;
Tel.: (416) 924-7721;
Fax:(416) 924-3188;
E-mail: acea@hookup.net

International Association for the Improvement of Mother Tongue Education (IAIMTE)
July 14 - 16, 1999
Amsterdam
Information: Gert Rijlaarsdam, Graduate SChool of Teaching and Learning, University of Amsterdam,Wibaustraat 2-4, 1091 GM Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Tel.: +3120525-1288;
Fax: +31 200 525-1290;
E-mail: rijlaars@ilo.uva.nl

Adult Literacy and Technology Conference (ALT)
July 29 - 31, 1999
St. Paul MN
Information: Literacy Training Network, University of St. Thomas, 2115 Summit avenue, #C11C131, St. Paul, MN, USA, 55105;
http://www.mlrc.stthomas.edu/alt1999/home.htm

11th European Conference on Reading
August 1 - 4, 1999
Stavanger, Norway
Information: Ingolv Austad, Center for Reading Research, Stavanger College, PO Box 2504, Ullandhaug, N-4004 Stavanger, Norway; Tel.:+47 51833200; Fax:+47 51833250;
E-mail: ingolv.austad@slf.his.no

The ASCD Conference on Teaching and Learning: Assessment in the Learning Organization
October 11 - 13, 1999
Reno, Nevada
Information: ASCD, 1-800-933-2723 or (703) 578-9600.

Summit 2000: Children, Youth and The Media Beyond the Millennium
May 13 - 16, 2000
Toronto ON
Information: John J. Pungente, SJ, Jesuit Communication Project, 60 St. Clair Avenue E. #1002, Toronto, On, Canada, M4T 1N5, Tel.:(416) 515-0466; Fax: (416) 515-0467; E-mail: pungente@chass.utoronto.ca

Laubach Literacy Action Biennial Conference
June 8 - 10, 2000
Orlando, FL
Information: Janet Hiemstra, Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210 Usa; Tel.: (315) 422-9121, ext. 283; Fax: (315) 422-6369; E-mail: jhiemstra@laubach.org

Summer Institutes 1999

Summer Institute for Teachers of Literature (NCTE)
May 31 - June 1, 1999
Myrtle Beach SC
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096, Tel: (217) 328-3870, ext. 203; Fax: (217) 328-0977

Seventh Annual Institute in Management and Community Development
June 7 - 11, 1999
Concordia University
Montreal, QC
Information: Institute in Management and Community Development, Concordia University, Loyola Campus,7141 Sherbrooke Street West, CC 326, Montreal, QC, H4B 1R6, Tel.: (514) 848-3956; Fax: (514) 848-4598

Summer Institute for Teachers
Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms
with Dr. Cynthia Selfe & Dr. Gail Hawisher
June 14 - 25, 1999
Michigan Technological University
Houghton, MI
Information: Gretchen Janssen, Office of Conferences and Institutes, Michigan Technological University, 1400 Townsend Drive, Houghton, MI 49931-1295; Tel.: (906) 487-2263; Fax: (906) 487-3101; E-mail: ci@mtu.edu

The Centre for Literacy & Georgia Tech Lifelong Learning Network
Literacy & Technology: Can less be more?
June 27 - 30, 1999
Montreal, QC
Information:
Tel: (514) 931-8731, ext 1415;
Fax (514) 931-5181;
E-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

Martha's Vineyard Summer Workshops 1999 Institute on Writing and Teaching
July 1999
Information: Becky Mallaghan, Martha's Vineyard Summer Workshops, Department of English, 406 Holmes Hall, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115, Tel.: (781)373-3637; E-mail: bmallagh@lynx.neu.edu;
Web site: www.casdn.neu.edu/~english/gradx.htm

National Writing and Thinking Network Workshops for High School Students
July 11 - 16,1999
Information: Judi Smith, Bard College, PO Box 5000, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504-5000,
Tel.: (914) 758-7484;
E-mail: jsmith@bard.edu

Writing Program Administration (WPA) Summer Workshop and Conference
Information: (520) 621-3371;
E-mail: enos@u.arizona.edu

7th Annual Summer Institute Low Literacy Communication Skills for Health Professionals
3 Programs with Jane Root and Sue Stableford
July 19 - 25, 1999
Maine AHEC Health Literacy Center
University of New England
Biddeford, ME
Information: UNE Office of Continuing Education, 11 Hills Beach Road, Biddeford, ME 04005,
Tel.: (207) 283-0170, Ext.2440

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Readings on new technologies and media

[The readings below are all excerpts from recent articles that reflect a wide range of thinking about new technologies. Sources are cited for those who want to pursue them. (LS)]

New technologies and the "true resources" of the school

What are the best resources for learning? In *The School and Society*, Dewey characterized the "impulses" of the child as the true resources of the school. These include the impulse to communicate, construct, inquire, and express oneself...

...

Using new communication and information technologies, teachers and students are discovering more ways to communicate with each other, to make things, to learn about the world, and to express themselves. Their discoveries point to exciting possibilities for learning today and in the new century. Thus, these new tools expand the range of possibilities for students to learn through communication, inquiry, construction, and expression.

Despite their great potential, there is now ample evidence that the existence of new media for learning does not in and of itself lead to better teaching and learning. If anything, the new media may simply amplify existing approaches to teaching. Thus, we need to look closely at how new media are actually used.

In a 1997 study www.ed.uiuc.edu/facstaff/chip/taxonomy of some of the most advanced technologies for learning (those supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation), Jim Levin and I found that many new systems do provide rich environments for communication and inquiry, reflecting attention to two of the impulses Dewey identified. There was less opportunity for construction, a consequence perhaps of many systems emphasizing the rich digital content now available on the Web. There was even less support for personal expression, consistent with the assumption in many curricula that art and personal expression are somehow less central to learning and can be neatly parceled out from learning content and skills.

Although some would argue that we need to parcel out the impulses, I see the power of the Web and other new media in the support of more integrated learning. In fact, without much explicit effort on the part of curriculum or technology designers, students are using the new technologies to do exactly the kind of integrated learning through communication, inquiry, construction, and expression that Dewey envisaged.

Bertram Bruce, "Learning through expression," Technology feature, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 42:4 (December 1998/January1999), p.307.

Teacher Training Online

Teacher Training Online is a web-based professional development training system designed to provide self-directed, self-paced instruction via the Internet. The training is capable of providing pre- and post-assessment as well as sound, video, and delivery of content whether you are using a Macintosh or PC. Ease of use and "anytime accessibility" make Teacher Training Online an ideal delivery system for professional development.

When you first log in to Teacher Training Online, you will be prompted for some information that allows the system to generate your unique user ID and password. From there, you can jump into the first training module offered: *Introducing Family Literacy to Your Adult Learners*. Following your completion of the module, you may choose to receive a certificate for Professional Improvement and Growth units. With one module online now, more are being developed and be appearing soon.

The other element that makes Teacher Training Online so effective is a "web-board." Known as TTO Discussions, the web-board is an integrated chat and discussion area that allows users to post questions for their colleagues, review lessons, and participate in real-time chats.

Teacher Training Online is a collaborative effort of the Staff Development Institute, the Employment Training Network, the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network and the California Distance Learning Project.

Teacher Training Online: http://www2.otan.dnt.us/tto.
TTO Discussions: http://www2.otan.dnt.us:808/-2.

abridged version of John Burge, "Teacher Training Online," *COABE Newsletter*, Fall 1998, pp.4 - 5. Originally reprinted from Online Connection, newsletter of OTAN, a California 353 project.

Supporting teachers on ICT and literacy in the UK

...Any attempt to move too rapidly to a totally on-line support system would be

extremely ill-advised. Although it is possible that the National Grid for Learning will become in time the main source of teacher support, making it available to teachers is only the first part of a process of re-education which will take, for some teachers, much longer than the four-year Grid implementation schedule. Paper resources and printed support... will continue to be needed but can be enhanced in future by providing on-line equivalents. These on-line parallel texts can be updated regularly, thus making them more attractive and useful than the paper equivalents, and modeling a message about ICT and literacy to teachers.

Chris Abbott, "ICT and Literacy." *Literacy Across the Curriculumedia Focus*, Volume 14, Nos. 1/2, p. 13

Globalization and the new technologies: Teaching about the media

Interculturalism and questions of identity are, of course, facilitated to a large extent by the existence of the new technologies and the trend toward globalization. The Internet and the new, multi-media technologies undoubtedly offer the possibility of radically transforming the way we communicate. This transformation is the subject of much discussion and analysis amongst a small number of people. It needs to become the subject of discussion and analysis for teachers and their students around the globe. There is much that they may be excited about, before being transported into the realms of techno-lyricism, however, we might also consider some other kinds of data for the information age. It has been calculated that one particular financial "wizard" on Wall Street was able to acquire in a year the same amount of money as would be paid to 78,000 American workers...Think also of the figures which suggest that in India, 120 million people now enjoy middle-class incomes, but 70% of the population are mired in poverty. Or take the example of Colombia, where the number of people living below the poverty line has increased by about one million since 1990 to include half the population of Colombia. One could move from continent to continent and the picture would be similar. This is at a time when we celebrate the coming of multimedia technologies and our government in the UK promises young people "training." Training in what, for what purpose and to what end we may ask. What I am arguing is that we should ask this as part of our teaching about the media. I am not arguing for Luddite approaches to the new technologies. I am asking that we put these contradictions before our teachers and students in order that they may be explored in the spirit of open, democratic inquiry.

It is true that the new technologies can bring us information in quantities heretofore undreamed of — if we have access to the necessary hardware and someone to pay the bills for the telephone lines. But it is also essential that there will be some kind of democratic access to these forms of communication. How will this occur in some of the countries that I have just described? These are questions for the media educator, and for the future citizens who will occupy the world of global communications. Some students will be able, through the information superhighway, to share their material wealth. Others will be able to share their material poverty. Both will be able to explore their common humanity, but it will not be an easy education ride. And the majority will remain outside this feast for quite a while to come.

Robert Ferguson, "Global Interculturalism and the Dilemmas of Universalism: Teaching the Media after 2000." *Mediacy*, Volume 20, No.3, (Fall 1998), pp.10-11.
[This is an excerpt from an abridged version of a keynote address to the International Congress on Communication and Education in Sao Paulo, Brazil, May 1998. Robert Ferguson is based at the Institute of Education, University of London.]

Sites cited: Media studies

The critical barrier for most teachers in using the Net is the overwhelming quantity of material and the lack of time to filter for quality. Many resource centres and associations are helping media studies teachers find quality online resources. The National Telemedia Council(NTC) runs "Notable Media Literacy Websites" in their journal *Telemedium*. Reviewers Keidra Chaney and Jenny Berman cite the ones they think will be most useful to teachers. Among 11 citations in the Summer 1998 issue are the **Media Literacy Online Project: http://interact.uoregon.edu/MediaLit/Homepage #Read** (US) and **Media Awareness Network: www.media-awareness.ca** (CA)

The British Film Institute's newsletter, *in focus*, (Issue 3 Autumn 1998) now offers "Web Wonders," an annotated listing of recommended sites. In it, Kate Stables tries "to sort the wheat (intelligent compilations of media resources and links) from the chaff (fan-based homepages or corporate cyber brochures)." Among her recommendations: **The Media Studies and Communications Site: http://www.aber.ac.uk./~dgc** (UK)

Summit 2000 Call for Papers and Media Education Workshops

Summit 2000: Children, Youth and The Media Beyond the Millennium. An International Conference coordinated by the Alliance for Children and The Jesuit Communication Project

May 13 - 16, 2000, Toronto ON

Call for Workshops

These should be interactive, use audio-visual materials & have classroom applications.

Language: English.
Deadline for submission: March 1, 1999

Fax, e-mail or post to:
John J. Pungente, SJ. Jesuit Communication Project.
60 St. Clair Avenue E. #1002.
Toronto, On, Canada, M4T 1N5.
Tel.:(416) 515-0466;
Fax: (416) 515-0467;
E-mail: pungente@chass.utoronto.ca

Call for Papers

These should address one of the three strands:

- Production and financing;
- Distribution and access;
- Media education.

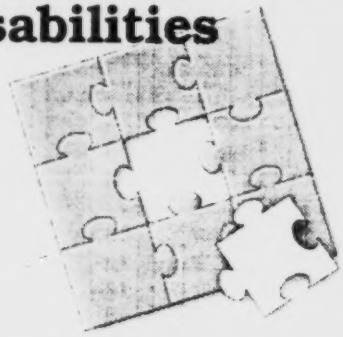
Languages: English, French, Spanish
(simultaneous translation will be available.)

Deadline for submission: March 1, 1999

Associate Professor Robyn Quin, Head, School of Communications and Multimedia, Edith Cowan University, Bradford Street, Mt. Lawley, Western Australia 6050.
Tel.: 61 8 9 370 6221; Fax:61 8 9 370 6668;
E-mail:r.quin@cowan.edu.au

S P R I N G S E R I E S

Helping adolescents and adults with learning disabilities



The Centre for Literacy, in cooperation with LDAQ Montreal Chapter 1, & Community Recreation Leadership Training (CRLT), Dawson College, presents three sessions:

WORKSHOP 1

Adolescent assessment: Academic evaluation of the high school student

Leader: Marlene Dworkind, M.Ed., Counselling and Development Concordia University
Date: Monday, April 12, 1999
Time: 5:30 – 9:30 p.m.

This workshop for parents and educators will focus on case studies of adolescent students with learning disabilities. It will give information on a typical evaluation at the high school level; explain the process of assessment, including standardized tests, interviews, observations, and informal assessment; talk about assessment of ADHD; and discuss the implications of testing results in terms of recommendations for instruction and remediation.

WORKSHOP 2

Adults with learning disabilities: A view from the inside

Leader: Patricia Hatt, M.Ed., consultant, Toronto
Date: Monday, April 26, 1999
Time: 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.

This session will focus on literacy acquisition from the view point of an adult with learning disabilities. To simplify her life, Pat has identified three main types of learning disabilities and developed strategies for them based on common sense teaching practices. Three case studies will be discussed, with time for questions and response.

DISCUSSION

Tutoring: Are you getting what you paid for?

Leader: Edward Gordon, Ph.D., Imperial Education Corporation, Chicago
Date: Monday, April 19, 1999
Time: 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Edward Gordon, author, consultant and owner of a large tutoring service, will lead a discussion on tutoring, its history and contemporary models – both paid and volunteer. He will present a rationale for monitoring tutoring services and discuss a checklist that he developed to guide parents in choosing and evaluating such services.

The Third Education/ Technology Month@ The Centre for Literacy

Teachers, tutors, and interested members of the public are invited to

- Preview software for basic skills
- Participate in discussions about the impact of learning technologies in our schools, community and homes
- Attend workshops and discussions

Public Discussions

Tuesday, February 9, 1999

- **How Quebec schools are using technologies for learning: Integrating technology into our curriculum**

[An Academic Alliance event co-sponsored by the Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ)]

This presentation will look at ways in which some Quebec teachers are planning and implementing learning activities or lessons in their classrooms, assessing and reflecting on their experience, and deciding what they need and are able to learn.

Leader: Deborah Gross,
Education technology, MEQ.
Service à la communauté anglophone.

Time: 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

No Cost

Wednesday, February 10, 1999

- **Poisonous Pedagogy**

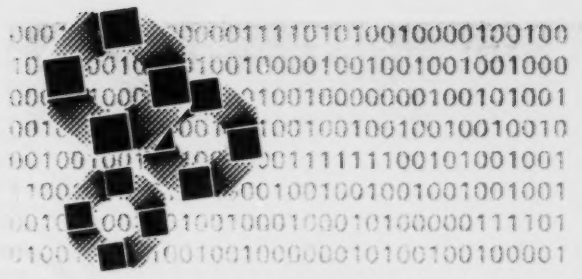
"Problems that show up in adult education classes are often sown in childhood. We don't need to be told to be strict or permissive; rather we must be told to respect children's feelings and individuality."

Source: Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good.*

Leader: Isa Helfield,
Adult educator, freelance writer

Time: 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Fee: $10.00



Workshop • Saturday, February 20, 1999

- **Computer resources within reach**

You will learn about practical resources for use with adult literacy students that are accessible to programs with limited equipment or financial resources and within the reach of instructors and students with minimal computer experience

Sample lesson plans that utilize common software such as database and word processing programs

Web sites of interest to literacy instructors and students There will be demonstrations of shareware and of reasonably-priced software.

Leader: Diane McCargar,
Assistant editor, CONNECT,
Ottawa, ON

Time: 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Fee: $50

Workshop • Wednesday, March 10, 1999

- **Technology and gender: Is anyone paying attention?**

[Co-sponsor: Canadian Congress of Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW)]

Current media analysis and government policy statements, such as the reports of the Information Highway Advisory Council, have tried to address the use of new information technology within a social framework of "continuous learning." This workshop will provide an overview of the current debates. It will also emphasize the omissions in the general debates; gender, for example, is seldom included in policy discussions of technology and learning.

Leader: Petra Mueller,
Concordia University

Time: 5:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Fee: $10.00

For information, call
(514) 931-8731, local 1415.
FAX (514) 931-5181,
e-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca;
Web site:http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

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Literacy Partners of Quebec & The Centre for Literacy of Quebec

are co-hosting

Golf Day

for Literacy in Quebec

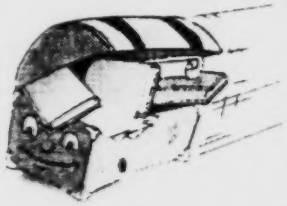
at Cedarbrook Golf Club
300 Des Cèdres, Ste-Sophie, Québec

Tuesday, June 1, 1999

CBC Montreal
Radio 940
Channel 6 - Cable 13

Dennis Trudeau
CBC Newswatch, Mtl.

Travelling Resource Trunks



These trunks provide resources to teachers and tutors who do not have easy access to materials due to time or distance. Although they are designed for providers of literacy and adult education, many of the materials are usable by teachers and coordinators in high school, college and community-based settings. All trunks contain sources and ordering information for items. There are currently 7 trunks in circulation and others being developed in response to demand. They include:

- **Learning Disabilities(2)**
- **New Materials**
- **Numeracy and Technology (2)**
- **Family Literacy & Women's Issues Trunk**

Communication, Literacy & Health

This trunk has been designed for people working in the health-care sector as well as for teachers who want to include health-related materials in their literacy or basic skills teaching. It has background on providing health information to clients with low literacy or no literacy in the official languages. It contains guidelines on writing patient information in clear language and using visual media, and provides examples from many settings. Files are organized by subject with several focusing on areas such as cancer, women's health, and medications.

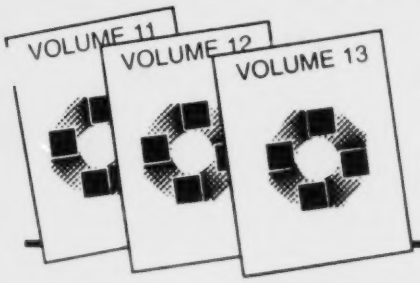
For more information on borrowing, contact;
Tel.: (514) 931-8731, ext. 1415

Workshop
Health and literacy: Plain language is not enough

Leader: Marcia Hohn, Director of Northeast SABES (System for Adult BasicEd Education Support), Massachusetts.

Date: Thursday, February 4, 1999
Time: 5:30 - 9:30 p.m.
Fee: $50.00 (includes supper and materials)

AVAILABLE AT THE CENTRE



Literacy Across the Curriculum & Media Focus: Back issues in a binder

Volumes 11, 12 and 13 can now be purchased in a single binder with index.
12 issues cost $20, plus $5 postage and handling
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NEW

Working Papers in Literacy

No. 1 Perspectives on IALS, Graff, Street, Jones

No. 2 Media literacy, information technology and the teaching of English, Abbott and Masterman

No. 3 Behaviour and beliefs of volunteer literacy tutors, Hambly

No. 4 Literacy and ITC: A Discussion Paper, Abbott

Nos. 1 and 3 are now on our Web site. Print copies of all Papers can be ordered. Price: **Canada, $6**; US, $7.; **Overseas, $10.**; prices include handling and postage.

Health, Communication and Literacy: An Annotated Bibliography, 2nd edition

A bibliography with annotations was published by The Centre in 1995. The second edition contains the original entries plus 23 additional entries on selected articles which have appeared in health journals since 1995. It includes a list of further articles on the subject and web sites of interest This edition was been produced with support from Canada Post. **Price: $10.** includes handling and postage.

Read and Write Together: An activity pack for parents and children

This kit was produced by The Basic Skill Agency and BBC Education in February 1995 for a national Family Literacy promotion campaign in the UK. **Price: $15.** plus $2 handling and postage.

The New Reading Disc

The acclaimed UK multimedia product designed by CTAD to help adult basic learners improve their reading and writing. Built-in Authoring Tool allows teachers to create local culturally appropriate materials.

The American New Reading Disc

(developed by CRT at Georgia Tech)
An American version of the original UK product with American topics and context, but the same prototype with Authoring Tool.

L.I.R.E. — Le Logiciel Interactif de Réentraînement à l'Ecriture

propose un nouveau concept qui, à travers l'utilisation d'ordinateurs Multimédia, permet à des personnnes d'améliorer leurs capacités à lire et à écrire en français.

Detailed descriptions on our Web site include a 38-site Canadian evaluation of the New Reading Disc: www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

Information on software pricing and orders:
The Centre for Literacy,
3040 Sherbrooke Street W.,
Montreal, QC, Canada, H3Z 1A4.
Tel.: (514) 931-8731, ext. 1415;
Fax: (514) 931-5181;
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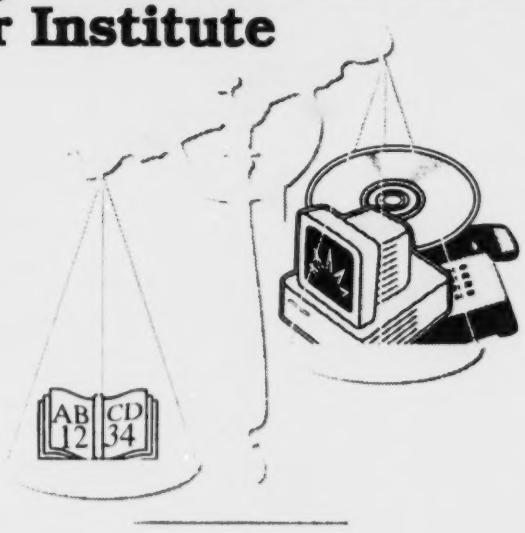
Literacy and Technology: Can less be more? A Participatory Summer Institute

June 27 - 30, 1999
Montreal, Quebec, Canada



The Institute is designed to accommodate about 40 participants in a collaborative setting — listening, discussing, exchanging and challenging ideas and practices connected to the uses of technology in adult literacy and basic skills education.

Features at the 1999 Institute:

• As soon as you register, we will begin to identify issues and initiate discussions by subscribing those who wish to a participants' listserv. Past participants will be invited to join. At the Institute, you will continue the discussions face-to-face.

• Chris Abbott from King's College, London, will participate by teleconference for one morning. Chris will talk with us about the challenges of web-based learning to concepts of literacy and to traditional teaching.

• We have added an optional half day for those who want some hands-on experience trying out software, visiting web sites and exploring various technologies presented at the Institute.

For brochure, call (514) 931-8731, ext. 1415; fax (514) 931-5181; or check our web site:www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

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DOUBLE ISSUE INCLUDES **SPECIAL INSERT: COMMUNITY WRITING**

LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUMEDIA FOCUS

Volume 14 • Issues 3 & 4

Connecting literacy, media and technology in the schools, community and workplace

James Paul Gee infuriated many teachers in a packed lecture hall when he suggested, among other things, that, at the level of "social languages," words, phrases and sentences have no fixed meanings, but are "'customized,' built, or assembled ..here and now, 'on the fly,' 'on the spot,' 'on line,' when and as we speak/write or listen /read." [1] He claims that is part of what we need to make explicit to our students.

Gee, known for sociolinguistic work on literacy, was talking about teaching both children and adults, and drew special attention to those learners he calls "authentic beginners." In earlier papers, he has referred to them as "latecomers," --people who arrive at learning sites after some others have already had time to practice, making the latecomers appear "slow."

However, because "latecomer" can imply that it isthe latecomers' fault that they have arrived late, Gee has changed the terminology; now he calls them "authentic beginners."

"Authentic beginners" are the children or adults who come to learning sites without the early preparation, pre-alignment of cultural values and sociocultural resources that more advantaged learners have. Children from some minority and lower class homes fit the description; so do many adult literacy students. Gee suggests that in schools, children who come prepared should be called "false beginners" because they already know so much of what is

valued in schools, and teachers assume that they are the norm: less privileged children seem "slow."

Adults who came to learning without the expected knowledge are also seen as "slow." Too much of what they need to know is taken for granted and never made explicit. Gee challenges this:

What I want to concentrate on here is not just the injustice of pretending that people are all together beginners when some are authentic beginners and some are false ones. I want to concentrate as well on just what it is that authentic beginners often don't know and need to know, if they are ever to "catch up" with false beginners, but which "insiders" often can't or won't tell them. Though I must admit as well that our whole idea of "catching up" is in serious need of interrogation itself. In many sites, especially in schools, we set the "norm" in terms of performance of the most advanced "false beginners" and then pretend that learners making quite "normal" and adequate progress by any rational standards, are not "really learning."

One implication is that we should not be teaching language as a "thing" or set of grammatical rules, but as different forms of discourse with social and political game rules. Gee believes we need to make those differences explicit to our students, and help them understand the different meanings that language can have in different contexts. We

INSIDE

TO PONDER 3
Learning Disabilities: NFB video 4
Health literacy centre 5
Women and literacy: CCLOW 6
Women and literacy: Male perspective .. 10
IN THE CLASSROOM:
Adults with learning disabilities 12
Media education/literacy education 13

PULL-OUT INSERT
COMMUNITY WRITING
Connecting literacy and the literary

Verbal & visual literacy:
research summaries 18
Concerning literacy and technology 20
Should IALS estimates be revised? 21
REVIEWS: Contested ground 23
REVIEWS: Setting the compass 25
RESOURCES: Community writing 26
CONFERENCES 27
HAPPENING AT THE CENTRE 29
AVAILABLE FROM THE CENTRE 30
Summer institute 2000 32

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also have to help them reflect on their own positions in relation to these different discourses. Otherwise, he suggests, we are doing them an injustice.

Years to know them

Supporting some of these claims is a recent book that studies the reading and writing of a selected group of college students at City University of New York (CUNY) over six years, taking account of their personal as well as their academic lives. Marilyn S. Sternglass' *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*[2] uncovers myriad factors that contributed to the development of these students as thinkers and writers who struggled against social, family work and economic constraints, yet managed to succeed.

But here's the rub. It took time, more time than almost any remedial program inside or outside an institution, anywhere in the US or Canada, is currently mandated to offer. Sternglass, in painting a portrait of the nine mainly minority students who remained in her study over the full six years, shows how they grew from underprepared students who could barely construct an acceptable academic assignment, into mature grad-uates who are holding full time jobs and supporting families with pride and dignity, often the first of their family to ever achieve this goal. She offers no neat solutions or quick fixes, but does ask what kind of society we are creating when we refuse to recognize the inequities in the lives of our most marginalized students that deny them the possibility of succeeding in our school systems in the same time frame as those more privileged.

CUNY was at the forefront of open admissions in the early 1970s and is at the forefront of retrenchment in the 1990's. Where the system was once willing to look at itself critically and see that adjustments and supports were required, now the blame has been shifted back to the student. Some critics suggest that open admissions failed because so many did not "make the grade" or took too long to do it, but others suggest that it provided options to thousands who did find a way through and who would never have made it otherwise. The argument can be applied to colleges across Canada and the US.

Transpose this study to the literacy sector, and many parallels exist. Formal programs are getting shorter and more functional: testing is used for gate-keeping; options for adult basic learning are diminishing; those furthest behind are least likely to find a way into current systems, much less a way through, as special needs support and time are absent.

When systems imposes false "standards" that force everyone into time-limited learning tracks, when we fail to distinguish between "false" and "authentic beginners," we perpetuate grave social injustices. Learning defies time frames; for real beginners, the road can be very long. [LS]

1 James Paul Gee, "Learning Language as a Matter of Learning Social Languages within Discourses." Paper presented at the Conference of College Composition and Communication, Atlanta, April 1999. Professor Gee is available at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Teacher Education Building, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison WI, 53706. jgee@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu

2 *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*, Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1997, won the Mina Shaughnessy Award of the Modern Language Association in 1998 and the Conference of College Composition and Communication's Outstanding Book Award in 1999.

LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUMEDIA FOCUS

The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec H3Z 1A4
Editor: Linda Shohet • **Layout & design:** Ponctuation Grafix
• Dépot legal – 1991 • ISSN 1192-3288 • Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec

The Centre for Literacy is committed to supporting and improving literacy practices in schools, community and workplace. It is dedicated to increasing public understanding of the changing definition of literacy in a complex society.

Literacy for the 21st century

Literacy encompasses a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development. In a technological society, the concept of literacy is expanding to include the media and electronic text, in addition to alphabetic and number systems. These abilities vary in different social and cultural contexts according to need and demand. Individuals must be given life-long learning opportunities to move along a continuum that includes the reading and writing, critical understanding, and decision-making abilities they need in their community.

The Centre for Literacy acknowledges Dawson College and the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada for their support.

The opinions expressed in articles, other than those signed by the editor, are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the philosophy or policy of The Centre for Literacy.

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1 On sponsorship of literacy

Just as the ages of radio and television accustom us to having programs brought to us by various commercial sponsors, it is useful to think about who or what underwrites occasions of literacy learning and use. Although the interests of the sponsor and the sponsored do not have to converge (and, in fact, may conflict) sponsors nevertheless set the terms for access to literacy and wield powerful incentives for compliance and loyalty. Sponsors are a tangible reminder that literacy learning throughout history has always required permission, sanction, assistance, coercion, or, at minimum, contact with existing trade routes. Sponsors are the delivery systems for the economies of literacy, the means by which these forces present themselves to- - and through-- individual learners. They also represent the causes into which people's literacy usually gets recruited.

....

Intuitively, sponsors seemed a fitting term for the figures who turned up most typically in people's memories of literacy learning; Older relatives, teachers, priests, supervisors, military officers, editors, influential authors. Sponsors, as we ordinarily think of them, are powerful figures who bankroll events or smooth the way for initiates. Usually richer, more knowledgeable, and more entrenched than the sponsored, sponsors nevertheless enter a reciprocal relationship with those they underwrite. They lend their resources or credibility to the sponsored but also stand to gain benefits from their success, whether by direct repayment or, indirectly, by credit of association. Sponsors also provided an appealing term in my analysis because of all the commercial references that appeared in these 20th century accounts -- the magazines, peddled encyclopedias, essay contests, radio and television programs, toys, fan clubs, writing tools, and so on, from which so much experience with literacy was derived. As the 20th century turned the abilities to read and write into widely exploitable resources, commercial sponsorship abounded.

Deborah Brandt, "Sponsors of Literacy," *College Composition and Communication* 49 (May 1998).

This essay opens up a way of thinking about literacy in economic terms different from those invoked by governments. Through 100 in-depth interviews with a diverse group of Americans born between 1900 and 1980, Brandt collected data about memories of learning to read and write across their lifetimes, focusing on the people, institutions, materials and motivations involved. Drawing on several of these case studies, she analyses who gets access to what forms of literacy; how literacy standards have changed in the past fifty years giving rise to the current "crisis" rhetoric; and how learners appropriate literacy for purposes other than those intended by their "sponsors."

2 On literacy and "lateness"

Then I looked at Hanna's handwriting and saw how much energy and struggle the writing had cost her. I was proud of her. At the same time, I was sorry for her, sorry for her delayed and failed life, sorry for the delays and failures of life in general. I thought that if the right time gets missed, if one has refused or been refused something for too long, it's too late, even if it is finally tackled with energy and received with joy. Or is there no such thing as "too late"? Is there only "late," and is "late" always better than "never"? I don't know.

Bernhard Schlink, *The Reader.* (Vintage Books: New York 1998)

An Oprah's Book Club choice and international bestseller, this novel uses reading and literacy as metaphors to explore the struggle of Germans born after the war to come to terms with the holocaust. It is a moving and disturbing story that leads readers into moral conundrums. I felt that Schlink's assumption of some stereotypes about the deficits of "illiterates" created a serious flaw at the core of the novel. Nevertheless, it continues to nag at me, invite me back to read again, and perhaps listen to it being read aloud.

3 On the power of metaphor to humanize literacy teaching

Reading and life, books and experiences, fiction and what "actually" happened, metaphorical and literal truths, dreams and drunken alley realities, expectations and limited possibilities -- all of these are so integrally, so complexly, intertwined with adult literacy theory and practice that without serious attention to them our work becomes a pinched and puny mockery of what it might be, a formula-written romance ground out by some hack instead of a novel by Calvino or, say, Gabriel García Márquez.

...

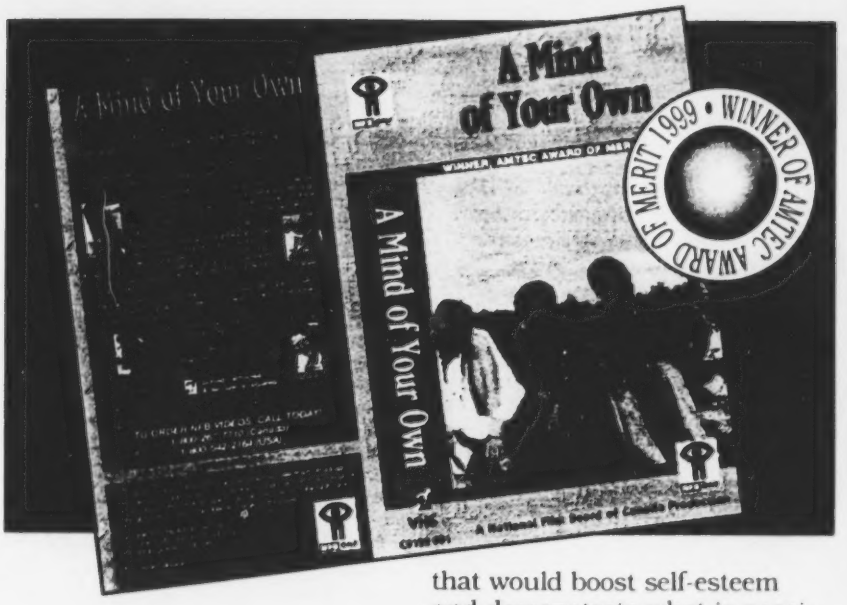
Reading as a way of going toward something we don't yet know, reading as a door to possible universes, literacy as storytelling about life and death, our life and death --these are the things that all of the Marys, actual and fictional, show us. I can hear you mumbling under your breath about "varieties of literacy," "functional uses," "cultural differences," and the "imposition " of an "elitist" view of literacy that "marginalizes" the poor, the uneducated, the oppressed. Literacy *is* elitist. It's a form of imaginative elitism that is useless if we as adult literacy educators do not recognize and promote it.

Francis E. Kazemek, "Mary's story: Reflections on literacy," *Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy* 42:8 (May 1999)

This article challenges some strongly held beliefs and practices in adult literacy today. Kazemek is an empathetic teacher who has taught in many places from rural Southern communities to prisons to institutional milieus for the mentally disabled; no matter where, he has used poetry to encourage reading and writing, and has listened to the stories of many "Marys," all of whom have challenged the dominant perspectives on literacy offered through the lens of "objective" science.

A Mind of Your Own

Learning Disabilities video screened



On October 5, The Centre hosted the first public screening of "A Mind of Your Own," a new NFB video about Max, Stephanie, Henry and Matt, four children with learning disabilities who have understood their disability, and learned how to cope with their weaknesses and promote their strengths and talents. Seventy-five participants, including parents, children and teachers, filled an auditorium to watch the video and hear four panelists respond.

Viewers at the October 5 screening.

• Fourteen-year old Carly Fridman, diagnosed as dyslexic in Grade 2, and now attending Centennial Academy, saw herself reflected in the video, and assured everyone that, with support from family and friends and school accommodation, LD kids can do as well as Max and the others.

• Linda Mahler, an elementary teacher at the English Montreal School Board, who pilot-tested the video in her children's philosophy classroom, shared her way of introducing the topic and sensitizing her students to the need for tolerance and support of difference. All the kids on tape spoke of the pain of being laughed at or belittled by peers in their early school years.

• Ralph Ross is Principal of Dawson Centre at the Douglas Hospital, and a long-time teacher, administrator and advocate for students with all types of disabilities. He talked about the potential of this video to create understanding and provide positive models for LD students. He acknowledged the difficulties of finding and sustaining support in the Quebec school system.

• Tamara Lynch, the producer, talked about its evolution and the decision to use footage of kids with strong coping skills. Because the intended audience is children, not adults, the production team wanted portrayals that would boost self-esteem and demonstrate what is possible in the right circumstances.

Response from the audience varied. While generally very positive, a few adults found the video too upbeat, and feared it might mislead viewers. The children, on the other hand, when asked by Ralph Ross whether they would show this video to others, unanimously said yes, they would like their teachers and classmates to see it. A teacher's guide and suggestions for classroom use are included on the videojacket.

Director: Gail Sweeney
Producer: Tamara Lynch
Running Time: 37 min 28 sec
ID number - C9199 001
Ages 10 and up

"A Mind of Your Own" is available for sale at $39.99 in Canada
To order call 1-800- 267-7710; in Montreal call 514-283-9000.
For US and international inquiries, call 514-283-9439.

The Centre for Literacy has a copy that can be borrowed. Call (514) 931-8731, ext. 1415, to reserve.

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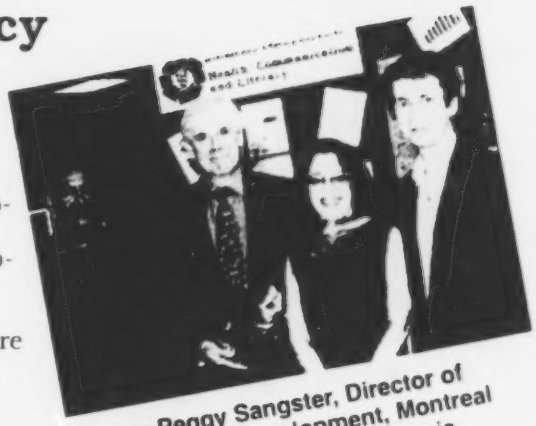
Innovative Health Literacy Centre Announced

The Montreal General Hospital, McGill University Health Centre, in co-operation with The Centre for Literacy, chose International Literacy Day to announce the creation of an innovative centre at the hospital that will cater to the information needs of traditionally hard-to-reach groups of patients. These include people with low literacy, with language or cultural barriers, and with learning difficulties, physical or cognitive.

Requests for funding are being vetted in several sectors, and the two organizations expect to conduct a detailed needs assessment in the coming year. The proposed centre will offer information and support to patients and families through diverse media and non-traditional approaches; it will also offer training and communications support for health care professionals. The site will serve as a testing ground for ideas and strategies that can be fine-tuned and incorporated into the Patient Information Centre projected as part of the amalgamated McGill University Health Centre scheduled to open in 2004.



l. to r.: Peggy Sangster, Director of Nursing Staff Development, Montreal General Hospital (MUHC), Dennis Trudeau, host of C.B.C. Newswatch, Linda Shohet, Director of The Centre for Literacy, David Dillon, President, The Centre for Literacy.

International Literacy Day 1999

On International Literacy Day, celebrating its tenth year of existence, The Centre honoured Dennis Trudeau and CBC Newswatch Montreal. Dennis has been spokesperson since 1994 for the annual Golf Day for Literacy in Quebec. The Centre has been a co-recipient with Literacy Partners of Quebec of the proceeds of the last two tournaments; our portion partially funded the health and literacy initiatives in local hospitals in1998 and 1999.

For the second year, on International Literacy Day, we organized a public display on health and literacy in the lobby of the Montreal General Hospital. Three large panels with graphs and data were complemented by information tables where passers-by could ask questions and pick up materials.

This year we added two large blank canvases where people were invited to paint a literacy message or image. The murals were the brainchild of Open City Productions 2002, a community-based organization dedicated to bringing the arts to the street. They have been helping community groups create a Great Millennial Wall to celebrate Human Rights. At the hospital, people lined up. Young, old, walking, in wheelchairs, with canes, alone, with friends, with attendants, patients, visitors, nurses, doctors, kitchen staff—everyone wanted to leave a mark. People kept asking if we would be back the next day. The urge to signify presence runs deep.

The literacy murals will become part of the Great Millennial Wall which will tour Canada in the Year 2000.

Dennis Trudeau makes the first mark on one of the literacy canvases.

The same canvas at the end of the day.

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Problematizing women's literacy:
The CCLOW experience

(notes from a session at the Women and Literacy Conference, Atlanta, January 1999)

by Linda Shohet

[In this session, my colleague Isa Helfield talked about her experiences in a Montreal adult literacy classroom working with women using CCLOW materials. One of the teachers who pilot-tested some of the women's literacy curriculum materials, Isa has worked with alternative methods for many years. She is sensitive to issues of abuse as they impact on learning. Isa epitomizes the many practioners who have benefited from CCLOW publications and activities. LS]

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is a national organization committed to researching and promoting education and training for women since 1979. For the past decade, the organization has undertaken a series of research, curriculum development and facilitator training projects on women and literacy. Through a rapid overview of the organization and their literacy work, I want to suggest that these projects have helped shape international discussion of the issue and have uncovered problems that mirror some current debates in both the women's movement and the literacy movement.

The context:
20 years of CCLOW

To situate this discussion, CCLOW was founded in 1979 by a group of Canadian feminists who perceived the need for an organization dedicated solely to the learning issues of women. Within ten years, they had achieved recognition in academic and government sectors for their research and advocacy on women' s education and training. They had created networks in every province and developed two publications, one of them *Women's Education des femmes*, a bilingual journal with serious gender analysis and strong classroom connections. They had also organized the first national conference on women and technology (1982) and initiated innovative projects such as the first bridging program for women in Canada.

....the cuts continued through the 1990s; the painful choices became more painful until many Canadian women's organizations have disappeared entirely.....

Celebrating their 10th anniversary in 1989, they made a number of commitments including creation of a scholarship for women returning to high school, and the beginning of two major research projects on women and literacy. The core of this presentation begins there.

But a note of concern has to be inserted here. In the 10th anniversary issue of *Women's Education des femmes*, the editorial raised a mild alarm:

> *Unfortunately, the climate ...has changed since the first ten years. We have recently been informed by the Women's Program, Secretary of State, that our operations funding will be cut by 15% from last year's level. In the short term, we are going to be forced to take some painful choices. In the long term, it will depend on us. Can we lobby successfully by ourselves and with other women's groups, to have the Women's Program spending policy reversed? Can we successfully do the outside fundraising ...to ensure we can carry on with the projects we have planned? Can we pull together...to make the next ten years as fruitful and productive as the last ten?*
>
> (Joan McFarland and Susan Witter, "A Dream Ten Years Old: A Challenge for the Future," *WEdf*, 1989)

Ten years later, I can tell you that the cuts continued through the 1990s; the painful choices became more painful until many Canadian women's organizations have disappeared entirely, and CCLOW has been reduced to having a part-time executive director and a part-time administrative assistant to run a national office. On March 31, 1999, CCLOW closed that office, but remained a functioning organization operating electronically with a contract-paid coordinator.

The positive side is that despite the cuts, through the 1990s, CCLOW remained productive, most visibly through its literacy projects.

Women and literacy

In 1990, CCLOW received the first of several grants from the National Literacy Secretariat. This was for a 2-year study of twelve adult literacy programs across the country, focusing on women's everyday experience in these programs. The programs had a variety of mandates and organizational structures; sites ranged from urban to rural, from the east to west coasts and the far north. They were located in community colleges, a union, and a prison; six were community-based – on the street, in store-fronts, in public housing, in a Native friendship centre and in a community centre.

At least two women from each of these programs considered what happens when women decide to engage in learning activities designed specifically for them; they called these activities "woman-positive." This phrase has now come into wide usage internationally without much awareness of its origins.

The project was ground-breaking in several ways. It did not start out to test any hypotheses, to increase students' levels of reading or writing or to improve grade standings. It did not set out to empower women or to encourage feminist analysis, or even to help programs become more woman-positive. But these things still happened.

As participatory action research, the project trained these women, then provided support and resources as they planned and implemented woman-positive activities in their programs. They developed a collaborative analysis and a series of recommendations. And they documented every step.

Among their findings was the prevalence of violence in the lives of adult learners that researchers such as Kate Rockhill and Jenny Horsman had recently uncovered. CCLOW as an organization eventually took up the subject of violence as a barrier to learning, dedicating two issues of *WEdf* and a series of national workshops to exploring it in depth and suggesting broad changes to education policy and practice.

The direct outcome of the literacy research was a set of three publications under a general heading of *Women in Literacy Speak Out*, including a detailed description of the project and a text for adult literacy classes. One recommendation lead to a second national project – developing curriculum for women's literacy.

At least two women from each of these programs considered what happens when women decide to engage in learning activities designed specifically for them; they called these activities "woman-positive." This phrase has now come into wide usage internationally without much awareness of its origins.

Modeling its commitment to feminist process, in winter 1994, through a national "Call for Participants," CCLOW put together a team of 15 women with classroom experience who had also developed teaching materials. They aimed for balance in locale (urban and rural), geography (regional), socio-economic status (full-time teachers and community-based part-time instructors/ tutors), and race. Fifteen women from amazingly diverse backgrounds formed a writing team during one intensive four-day retreat, then worked independently over the next year communicating by phone, fax and computer. The group reconvened the following year for another intensive weekend to share their "chapters" and to designate one "editor" and an editorial committee. Thirteen women completed modules which were published in 1996 as a "curriculum" called *Making Connections*. This collection provided a source book of woman-positive materials for literacy or ESL in many settings. The voices of each author were left intact framed by chapters on "Feminist Curriculum" and "Dealing with Violence." It aimed to be inclusive and sensitive to class, race, gender and social-economic inequity.

But many programs across Canada had never seen such materials before and did not know how to use them. Their questions lead to the most recent of the CCLOW projects -- to train another diverse group of women to lead workshops for other teachers and tutors. The same feminist process was adopted to bond the group, but this project took the organization in new directions when facilitators returned from a year of pilot-testing in June 1998 to share their experiences. Several native women and women of colour expressed dismay or anger at materials they found to be inappropriate for their com-

POSTPONED TO WINTER 2000 – DATES: TBA

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women

The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW) is a national, feminist organization dedicated to addressing education and training issues for girls and women. Our vision is women's social, political, and economic equality through expanded learning opportunities. Key focus areas are literacy, equity in education, and job training.

DESIGNING OUR FUTURE:

Women's learning, education, and training in Canada -- 2000 and beyond

A National Congress, prefaced by a series of on-line discussions.

November 4 -7, 1999.
Toronto, Ontario

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT).

This national Congress provides an opportunity for individuals with a personal or organizational interest in women's education and training to meet and network. The aims of the Congress and on-line discussions are:

- to clarify what we know about the challenges and opportunities that have arisen
- to think together about what we can do, through research, practice, policy, and/or advocacy to achieve more effective involvement by women in current and future learning opportunities.

Those interested in ongoing involvement will have an opportunity to shape strategies, and to help re-design CCLOW's organizational infrastructure to support the work.

Two major themes will be addressed:

- Women's education and training for labour market participation
- Women's literacy education foundation learning for full participation in society.

Other themes to be explored include:

- Violence and trauma – impact on women's learning and the response of adult educators
- New communication technologies – impact on women's learning and their potential in education and training
- Supporting women's participation in education and training – income support, child care, transportation, prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), counselling, accessibility, learning tools/resources
- Changing demographics – older women and learning.

Sponsors:

- The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW).
- The Centre for Women's Studies and the Department of Adult Education, Community Development, and Counselling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

Information: Gladys Watson,
Tel.: (416) 532-9108;
Fax: (416) 533-9062

42

munities, and some of the women felt they had not clearly understood what CCLOW was when they became involved.

During a weekend retreat, deep wounds were opened as issues of race and class were uncovered, and women of good will discovered that they were not speaking the same language when they used the same words. This literacy project was in fact about literacy at its most profound -- the ability to make meaning and communicate across barriers. The problems that were unearthed shook the entire organization and forced it to re-examine both the way it has defined itself and the way it is perceived by others.

This crisis occurred at almost the same time as the organ-ization was having to face questions about its own survival, and in some ways, it both heightened awareness at the directors' table and mirrored some of the larger debates. These questions touch both women's and literacy organizations: What has feminism to offer minority women? Who can claim to speak for all women? What are the dominant discourses? Whose literacy is privileged? When do women's loyalties to their racial or cultural communities supersede their commitments to women's issues?

The pain of these debates has been almost greater than the pain of the external cuts. Where does that leave CCLOW and the work it has done? I would argue that CCLOW has moved the women's literacy agenda forward as no other organization has. In looking systematically and steadily at issues that no one wanted to talk about -- women's learning needs, violence as a barrier, feminist process-- they have touched practitioners around

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the world and seeded further research. A large strand of this conference is built around concerns explored by them. That is a strong legacy.

In relation to the huge divide that was uncovered last year, again there has been a move to find common ground. A group of women who participated in that project have spent the past months trying to make sense of it; they came to this conference to talk about their experience of "othering," and have suggested some directions that might move us outside of our ethnocentric bounds. Centuries of oppression and conditioning have created these bounds, and no magic formula will dissolve them quickly. But the women who have chosen to engage with the problems and search for alternatives, other than rage and hate, seem to me to embody the best of what CCLOW has offered: Opportunity. Without CCLOW, these women would not have known one another and had the opportunity to work together.

And CCLOW is trying to reinvent itself as well in its twentieth year. They have opted to use this year's funding to host a national congress in November. They will invite women who are committed to the goals of promoting women's learning to come together to define what they see as the key issues in that area for the next decade and to say whether there is energy and commitment to reshape CCLOW to address those needs. If there is a response, then CCLOW will exist in an as yet undetermined form in the year 2000. If there is not, then it will celebrate its 20 years of achievement and close down with dignity, allowing other groups to take up the challenges.

Linda Shohet is Director of The Centre for Literacy (Montreal). She has been the Quebec member on the CCLOW board since 1993 and chaired their Literacy Committee. She was a team member on both the curriculum and facilitators projects.

Listserv on women and literacy

A listserv on women and literacy was announced following the Atlanta conference at http://novel.nifl.gov/NIFL-WOMENLIT. It is designed for providers, advocates, researchers, learners, policy makers, and anyone interested in exploring the links between women's lives and their literacies.

The NIFL-WOMENLIT listserv has three primary goals:

1. To foster discussion and information exchanges on women and literacy among people separated by distance. Possible topics include: women and literacy in countries outside the United States, health literacy as it pertains to women's issues, the role of women's literacy in family literacy programs, domestic violence and its intersection with literacy, women's literacy levels and its ties to economics and the welfare of families, women's access to literacy in different cultures, connection between women's literacy and political agendas, identification of low literate women's communication networks, and discussion of action steps addressing women and literacy.

2. To share resources on issues related to women and literacy.

3. To encourage an exploration of potential research projects by providing an open forum for exchange of ideas.

NIFL-WOMENLIT is one of 10 forum/lists set up by the National Institute for Literacy's LINCS network (http://www.nifl.gov). List moderator: Daphne Greenberg, Associate Director of the Center for the Study of Adult Literacy (CSAL) at Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Women, Work and Computerization:

Charting a Course to the Future

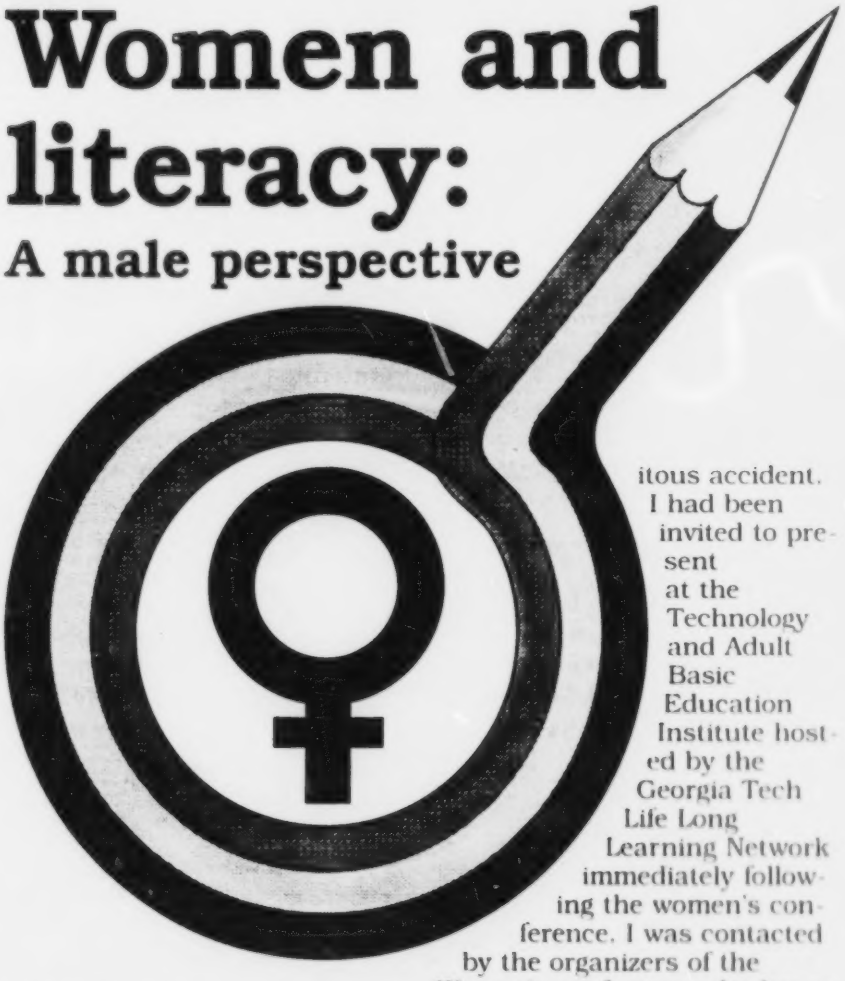
7th International Federation of Information Processing - (IFIP)

June 8 -11, 2000

Vancouver, B.C., CANADA

Women and literacy:

A male perspective



by Anson Green

As a part-time instructor in a TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) Welfare-to-Work program, I am naturally drawn to women's issues in adult education. For me, all issues in my class usually boil down to being "women-centered." My class is made up of mostly Latina women from the west side of San Antonio, Texas. For us, welfare reform, domestic violence, racism and women's health issues are themes we visit and revisit continually through discussion and student projects.

My attendance at the International Conference on Women and Literacy in Atlanta, (January 24-26) was a fortuitous accident. I had been invited to present at the Technology and Adult Basic Education Institute hosted by the Georgia Tech Life Long Learning Network immediately following the women's conference. I was contacted by the organizers of the Women's conference who knew about my work. In the eleventh hour of planning, I was lucky enough to have a proposal accepted on a student-generated welfare-to-work curriculum I am writing with my students.

Because the sessions were so directed to the population I work with daily, the conference was surely the most thought provoking, dynamic and useful I have ever attended; surprising to me at the time, it was also one of the most gender-biased events I have ever been to. Out of over one hundred participants, there were fewer than five men. I say this not to deride the rich event, but to state a curious fact and offer my perspective, as a man, on the conference.

Call me naïve, but when I first heard the name, International Conference on Women and Literacy, I thought it would be simply that-- a conference on issues that affect women in literacy programs. Though it was not the organizers' intention, the conference was viewed by many, both participants and non-participants who chose not to attend, as a conference *for* women who work *with* women learners. While this may seem a subtle difference, it was very evident during the proceedings and got me thinking about the implications of this for the big picture of adult education.

Here we are in a field where the majority of participants in many programs are women and particularly women of low-income. Sessions that address the effects of welfare reform, domestic violence, women's health and learning disabilities on literacy acquisition should not be subjects of a specific conference devoted to women and attended by mostly women, but rather should become part of the "normal" discourse in adult literacy literature and conferences. These concerns should certainly be better and more strongly articulated in the public policy that drives much of our field. These topics are huge, difficult issues for which we are neither prepared nor funded to address. Yet, as practitioners, we do try to address them because these are the issues which occupy many learners' lives and often hinder their educational goals.

I was not the first to notice my minority status at the conference. A female participant brought it to my attention, emphasizing that it was unique that men were in attendance. As we spoke, I began to share my excitement over some of the

sessions and also my work on domestic violence with the women in my class. She asked me if I felt that the women in my class would really talk to me truthfully about their experiences in violent relationships. I could tell she was skeptical that a male could or should be working with women on these issues. I was struck by her implications and for the rest of the conference felt a similar "chilling effect" from several other participants.

I would be misrepresenting the conference if I were to focus more on this. The majority of the participants welcomed the male contingent, and I felt my input and opinions were respected. All the sessions I attended including the penetrating sessions conducted by keynote speaker Jenny Horsman were powerful, thought provoking and most definitely "inclusive." I was later informed by another participant that this almost combative partisanship is an issue that is endemic amongst segments of the feminist movement in general. Being cast as "the other" was a unique experience for me and got me thinking about how gravely this division affects a field that, if anything, needs more definition and unity.

Why not a Gender and Literacy Conferenc?

My real concern lies in how something as simple as a conference title can make exclusive, and even marginalize, an event that deals with issues so crucial and so in need of greater awareness in adult literacy. Possibly broadening the focus to a "Gender and Literacy Conference" or broadening the scope of more general adult education conferences is the answer.

A gender and literacy conference would perhaps allow us to explore what many feel is the most unsung population of adults in need of our services: the low-literate men who are saddled with working several low-wage jobs to support their families and either choose not to, or cannot, consider returning to education. In a field where administrators and policy makers are to a great extent male, we must find ways to collectively generate greater awareness if we hope to better affect public policy and attract more funding.

So where does this leave us in the discussion? Some would argue that the adult literacy field is too broad and needs conferences that narrow the focus on particular subjects such as technology, learning disabilities, or women's issues. I feel that, while this may allow us to better probe specific issues, care must be taken not to appear so exclusive that the issues become part of a closed club and allow many in the field to "opt-out" of the discussion.

Another group is of the opinion that there are times, such as conferences focused on a particular population, when "others" can be invited but that their role should be limited to that of observers or listeners since the issues might not affect them directly . Though I see part of the point here, I feel that such exclusiveness is not a luxury we can afford if it drives away many in the field who are concerned, capable, and informed on the issues. At times the civil rights movement has been plagued by such exclusiveness but it has found its greatest strength through collective inclusive action.

One conference participant succinctly summarized the issues in a recent listserv posting, "If we allow our energies to be dominated by this discussion (gender-bias), I feel we miss the larger point-- that we can look at specific needs and support each other as we reach to both the broader and more focused issues." I don't think it could be better said.

Anson M. Green is an Instructor and Coordinator at La COCINA de Vida, Northside Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas. http://members.aol.com/ansongreen/welcome.html
He welcomes response.

NOTE: Critical Issues for Women in Adult ESOL

Papers presented at the TESOL 1999 academic session on Critical Issues for Women in Adult ESOL can be found at:

http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Swearer_Center/Literacy_Resources/tesol.99.html

For information on adult education sessions planned for TESOL 2000, contact Elsa Auerbach, Chair, Adult Ed Interest Section, TESOL. Tel.: (617)287-5763
E-mail: auerbach@umbsky.cc.umb.edu

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Adults with learning difficulties:

Strategies for visual and auditory problems

by Pat Hatt, Adult educator

At the 1999 Summer Institute on Literacy and Technology, Pat Hatt used her personal experience as an LD learner to frame her comments on technology which has not been as useful to her as it seems to have been for some others.

She did share sets of shorthand strategies that have helped her and the many LD students she has taught over the years. They are all usable with or without technology. [Ed.]

If learners have problems Processing Visual Information

- Use a sound or phonics-based reading program.
- Teach irregular sound combinations: "tion" "ing".
- Teach vowel rules "when two vowels go out walking, the first one does the talking..."
- Use short poems (the rhyme and rhythm help in predicting sounds and words).
- Teach word search skills to find answers quickly.
- Teach skimming skills (getting the "gist" of what a paragraph is about).
- Teach scanning (looking for where important information can usually be found, i.e. first and last paragraph).
- Use closure exercises (to help with prediction and break word by word reading pattern).
- Do not have them read aloud if it makes them the least uncomfortable.
- Teach pre-reading skills to show them what to look for when reading.
- Teach metacognitive skills to help them interact with text and make it personal and meaningful.
- Teach word families with emphasis on sounds.
- Use spelling tricks.
- Use sound to remember words for spelling: "Scissor" "s(k)issor"
- Use word sentences (pneumonics) "Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge" (lines in music).

If learners have problems Processing Auditory Information

- Use sight word approach.
- Use flash cards with personalized/meaningful vocabulary.
- Teach structure rules for prefix, suffix, root words, plurals, etc.
- Start with own stories rather than prepared text.
- Have them write out words and stories (the act of writing helps imprint the words for them).
- Use a spelling list approach to spelling.
- Note the shape of difficult to remember words.
- Use cloze exercises to help them see they can predict unknown words through context clues.
- Do not have them read aloud until they know the vocabulary well.
- Teach new words before having them read a passage.
- Teach pre-reading questions so they know what to look for.
- Use charts for rules.
- Use spelling tricks. which / witch
- Use pictures to remember words e.g. Scissors (the two "ss" are loops on scissors)
- Use charts to remember

Pros	Cons

If learners have problems Organizing information or lack school based skills

- Explain what reading is like:

1. Decoding uses sounds, sight and context clues.
2. You must make information you read link up to information you have, to make it meaningful.
3. Writers use patterns (i.e. the most important information is in the first and last paragraph).
4. There are several different ways to read:

- for general information, i.e. newspapers
- for enjoyment, i.e. a novel
- for specific information, i.e. a text book or manual.

- Teach comprehension skills

- pre-reading questions looking for who, why, what, where, when...
- word search for a specific word to answer
- questions usually go in same order as test
- use a glossary at the end of a book to find what page in the book it talks about a specific issue.

- Find out what patterns for memory they use that are successful.
- Use spelling tricks.
  - e.g. like "business"
  You take the "bus" to work
  Don't forget the "sin" in business
  $$: you want to earn a lot of money

  - words that end in 'ce' are nouns; words that end in 'se' are verbs

  e.g. advise/advice or practise/practice
- Help them understand why things happen and help them see that new information is "like" information they have.

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Media education as literacy education

by Winston Emery and
Lee Rother

An upcoming issue of the journal *Communicar*, published by a group of media educators in Spain has as its theme "Alternatives in media education." The alternatives refer to sources of theory for Media Education other than Mass Communication theory. The introduction begins with a quotation from a recent book by Jacques Piette (1998) of the University of Sherbrooke who suggests that media education theory relies almost exclusively on theories of mass communication and implies that perhaps there are other purposes and goals of media education than merely analysing mass communication texts.

We would challenge Piette's assumption that media education borrows exclusively from (mass) communications and argue that the principal goal of media education ought to be the development of literacy.

Now literacy is something that concerns everyone - the old, the young, those in formal education and those outside it - and it certainly incorporates human communication. Indeed, in Canada and, to some extent, in the United States, the term "media literacy" substitutes for media education. This is no accident. There has been a long history of media education within the framework of the formal study of English in and out of school. Since the late 1960's, a philosophical stance and specific relevant theory have been developed regarding the teaching and learning of English that enable teachers of the subject to include the study and production of media. Furthermore, since the development of literacy is seen as directly tied to the learning of language, then concepts of literacy have likewise evolved to include all forms of media. In this reflection, we explore these developments and present a model connecting media education and literacy by referring briefly to some literacy work we are doing with at-risk adolescents.

In *Media Education as part of English: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*, Buckingham (1993) reminds us that, in Britain, English teachers have been teaching about the media since at least the 1930's. In North America, we note Applebee's (1974) observation that in early twentieth-century English classrooms, newspapers, magazines and comics were "tolerated" by teachers as means by which they might assist lower class children to develop an interest in common mainstream texts. This interest in teaching the media has steadily expanded in scope and depth to include radio, film, television and popular music. By the1960's in Britain and by the mid-60's in Canada (see Duncan, 1993), many English teachers were teaching about media alongside fiction, poetry, creative writing and grammar.

Since 1970 in almost every province in Canada, provisions have been made in English/ Language Arts (ELA) curricula for activities related to the study of media. [See BOX 1]

Many of these provisions reflected concerns being voiced across the country about the influence

BOX 1

Media study in Canadian schools

Consider these sample statements:

- from British Columbia's *English 10: A Resource Guide for Teachers*:
  [The students should]
  Understand the functions and influences of various mass media, including newspaper, magazines, radio, television and film, and be able to make discriminatory choices.

  Understand the functions and influences of various mass media in selling commercial products, including the use of persuasive devices and false logic. (p. 11)

- from New Brunswick's *Junior High School English Language Arts Curriculum Guide:* The school must help students develop mass media literacy through an exploration of media use. (p. 1.)

- from Alberta's *Elementary Language Arts Curriculum Guide*:

  Grade One pupils should:
  - apply basic listening and viewing skills
  - demonstrate the desire to listen and view effectively...
  - demonstrate listening and viewing awareness...practice listening/viewing courtesy...
  - understand, extend and judge ideas received auditorially and visually:.. (p. 6)

of television. In response, English language arts educators, who were just beginning to see connections between television and language, added "viewing" as an important component of new Language Arts curricula that proliferated at the time. Many of the curriculum statements reflect an "inoculative" stance; however, the inclusion of media study requirements was fortuitous. It provided room for subsequent groups of media educators who used a more comprehensive theory of the relations among the various media, language and culture to develop new curricular materials. These educators were mindful of the variety of ways in which audiences appropriate and use mass media texts,

These materials have, in turn, re-shaped the curricula. In 1995, two provinces produced documents related to media education: Ontario produced *Provincial Standards , Language, Grades 1 - 9* with "Viewing and Representing" outcomes to be achieved in every Ontario English Language Arts classroom at the end of Grades 3, 6 and 9. Quebec published *Media Files*, a guide to accompany its *Secondary English Language Arts, I-V program*. The Atlantic region has recently produced a draft English Language Arts curriculum document with substantial media literacy and information technology components. Western Canada released a media education document which will apply to ELA curricula. In these new documents one can see the shift in conceptualization that has occurred since the earlier curricular statements.

A shift in the concept of English education

Through the 1970's, '80's and early '90's, English educators have become Language Arts educators who recognize that language as it develops serves important human functions -- expressive, transactional and poetic (e.g. Britton, 1976); that language is organized into forms of discourse, oral, written and visual (e.g. Moffett and Wagner, 1975); that language is developed in social contexts (e.g. Bruffee, 1986); that language serves intentions of writers (e.g. Graves, 1983) and readers (e.g. Rosenblatt, 1978); and that language is generated for audiences (e.g. Doughty, Pearce and Thornton, 1971).

English Language Arts education is about providing learners opportunities to use and investigate language in all its dimensions, so that they can come to terms with the ideas of the world in which they live and can act critically, creatively and consciously on that world (see for e.g. Greene, 1988) . It has come to see reading and writing as complex processes that have cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions. For these educators, reading includes all kinds of text: from Shakespeare to shopping malls, from *Sesame Street* to the *Wall Street Journal*; writing includes producing a television commercial or performing a radio talk show, or writing an essay on the computer.

Much of this new conceptualization has been influenced by developments in other fields, such as communications and linguistics; however, we would argue that within the field of English education the preconditions existed for the ready adoption of these ideas and that many aspects there preceded developments in both the fields of communication and media education.

A changing concept of literacy

These changes have resulted in a changing conceptualization of literacy. We have moved beyond earlier considerations involving both the elitist aspect, such as the ability to interpret the great literary works of the golden literary past, and the functional aspects of language, such as

BOX 2

Brian Street's "Ideological Model" of Literacy

Street's "Ideological Model" of Literacy includes the following assumptions:

- that the meaning of literacy depends upon the social institutions in which it is embedded;
- that literacy can only be known to us in forms which already have political and ideological significance and it cannot, therefore, be helpfully separated from that significance and treated as though it were an 'autonomous' thing;
- that the particular practices of reading and writing that are taught in any context depend upon such aspects of social structure as stratification and the role of educational institutions;
- that the processes whereby reading and writing are learned construct the meaning of it for particular practitioners;
- that we would probably more appropriately refer to 'literacies' than to any single 'literacy'

Writers who tend towards this model and away from the "autonomous" model recognise as problematic the relationship between the analysis of any "autonomous" isolable qualities of literacy and the analysis of the ideological and political nature of literacy practice. (Street, p.8).

ordinary everyday communication or being able to understand and express oneself in the workplace, to a conceptualization of literacy probably best characterized by Brian Street (1984). [See BOX 2] John Willinsky, in describing the new literacy, outlines some key principles that have developed from English Language Arts theory and practice. [See BOX 3].

BOX 3

John Willinsky on the "new literacy"

Recent English Language Arts theory and practice that underlie the "new literacy" include the assumptions that:

- what counts is the use of language rather than the medium or technology;
- texts are not fixed creations, but develop through collaboration and appropriation of texts which already exist;
- all texts, oral written and visual are dependent on the socio-cultural meaning of signs;
- mainstream popular culture forms can serve as sites for exploring the relationship between one's position in society and the sociopolitical ideologies in society;
- understanding the theoretical and production aspects of media studies can help students demystify media texts;
- postmodern literacy is critical literacy that, through the use of language, promotes public consciousness of social, cultural and economic ideologies. (Willinsky, 1991)

***Media Files:* Integrating media education through the new literacy**

In their introduction to *Media Files*, which outlines the Quebec Education Ministry guidelines, Emery and Anderson et al. (1995) attempt to consolidate for English teachers, the evolution of English Language Arts theory and Willinsky's notion of postmodern literacy. First, they encourage teachers to reconceive texts as cultural artefacts -- a weaving together of signs drawn from an individual's experiences as a member of a culture-- created for the purpose of communicating ideas. Texts, therefore, include print (fiction and non-fiction), radio, television and film, environments such as shopping malls, and toys like Barbie and GI Joe dolls. (We have used the word "signs" - a term for objects, icons, symbols and/or words, comprising a signifier and a signified - instead of "words" or "symbols", because the term more accurately applies to all forms of language, including the media as well as traditional forms of language.)

Next they introduce the terms "repertoire" (developed from McCormick, Waller and Flower, 1992) and "ideology":

> *... [repertoire] refers to a combination of knowledge, experiences, habits, norms conventions and assumptions that are brought to bear by an individual in any specific reading or writing instance. ...For purposes of our discussion [of literacy], we conceive of two aspects or categories of repertoire: that which includes matters related to discourse and its forms - medium, genre, mode rhetoric and code; and that which includes matters of ideology. Both aspects of repertoire are shaped by social, cultural, historical and gendered experiences. (Media Files, p.5)*

Emery and Anderson see reading as a transactional process in which a reader and her/his repertoire meets a text and its author's or producers' repertoire(s). Reading is a cognitive act in which readers, because they attach different meanings to the signs of a text, help to create the texts they read. Thus, different readers may make sense of the same text in quite different ways. To some extent, the diversity of readings may be invited or allowed by the nature of the text itself.

Furthermore, because readers may read a range of different texts, i.e. have different repertoires, this will affect the reading of a particular text. Reading is, at the same time, a social process in that the meaning of a text is not established by a reader in isolation, but rather, through social interaction and principally through talk. How individuals talk about and use what they read both shapes and reflects their own cultural identities. Readers develop hypotheses about how other people read and form alliances with other individuals who read like they do. They also define themselves socially and culturally in terms of tastes and preferences, in terms of what they are not, as well as what they are (see Buckingham and Sefton-Green,1994). In short, in any given encounter with a text, a complex interplay of repertoires takes place.

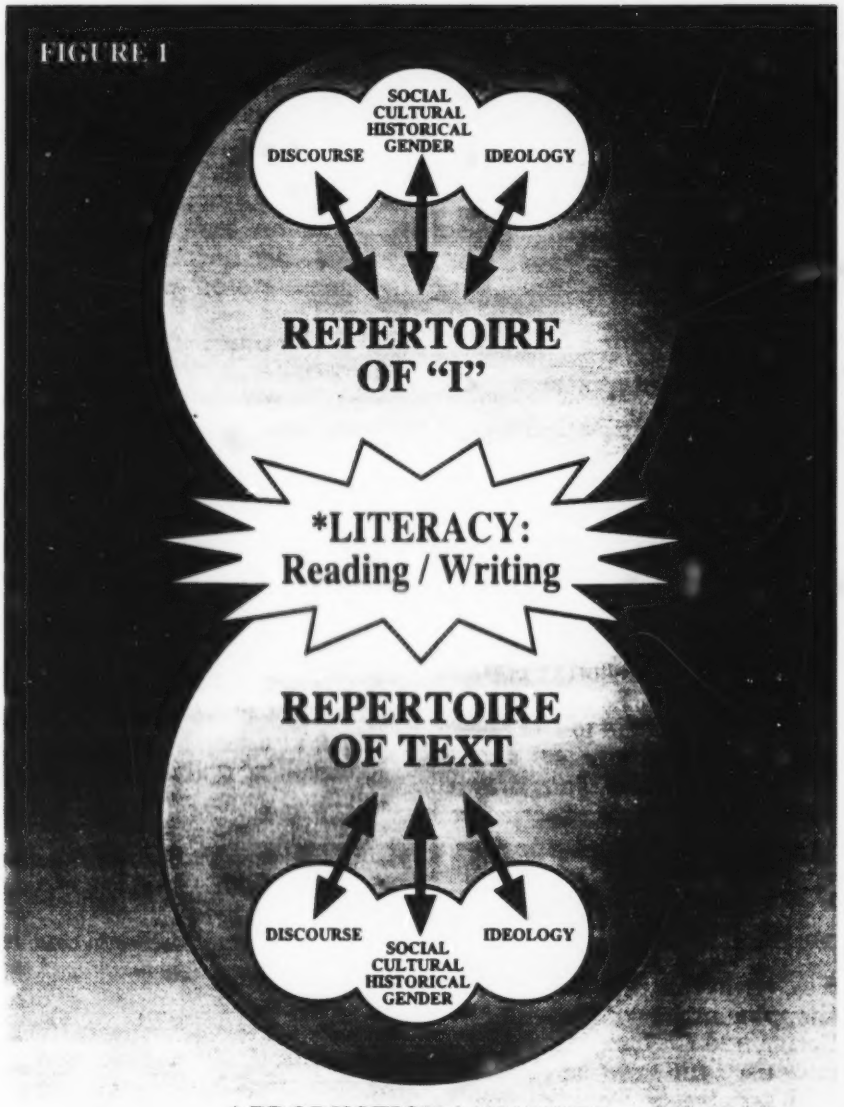
Writing is also presented as a process which involves writers use of complex discursive and general repertoires to construct texts for real or imagined readers/audiences, who "read" them. Like reading, writing is a complex cognitive activity in which individuals construct texts for others using media modes and codes of communication, according to forms and conventions characteristic of discourse in specific contexts. It, too, is simultaneously a social process in that writers construct discourse from certain socio-cul-

tural communities or contexts to others within or outside these communities or contexts. They bring to bear complex rhetorical strategies that enable them to articulate who they are as much as what they have to say.

Finally, reading and writing are not presented as discrete activities, but as simultaneously interactive processes so that even when readers act "in the reading mode," they are constructing, i.e. "writing" meaning. When writers write, they read the meanings of what they write not only as readers of themselves but also as imagined other readers of their texts. Within the framework of these assumptions, literacy constitutes the individual's conscious use of new or expanding repertoires as a reader and a writer.

This conceptualization of literacy [See Figure 1] enables us to consider its developmental nature and the possibility of literacy education – of which media education can now be considered an integral part – extending beyond formal schooling to all levels of education.

FIGURE 1



*** PRODUCTION / ANALYSIS**

DISCOURSE	MEANINGS	KNOWLEDGE
• Language	• Individual	• Conscious
• Codes	• Society	• Critical
• Modes	• Culture	• Practical & Action-based
• Media		

Media education and literacy: A study of At-Risk Adolescents

The struggle for literacy is, at the same time, a struggle for development, justice, greater equality, respect of cultures and recognition of the human dignity of all and the claims of each to an economic, social and political stake in society and the fruits which derive therefrom. (UNESCO, 1989, p. 4.)

Over the past few years we have been studying groups of students who are "at- risk". One of the characterizations of such students is that they possess low levels of literacy, are often unmotivated to engage in the academic activity of schools and exhibit a variety of behaviour problems. The characterization results, we now believe, from assessment practices based almost exclusively on the ability to interpret and generate certain forms of print texts. Because at-risk students have not been particularly successful in these contexts, assumptions are made as to their intellectual abilities, prescriptions are made for drill and practice exercises of "correct" language usage, materials are "dumbed-down" and consequently, they often find themselves engaged in the "struggle" described above. In many instances, they give up the struggle. The drop-out rate in Quebec secondary schools is currently over 40%. Furthermore, we speculate that many adults have been similarly assessed for their levels of literacy and similarly treated. Using the re-conceptualization of liter-

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COMMUNITY WRITING: Connecting literacy and the literary

..."the tone of a culture cannot depend only on the occasional genius, or the illusion of one; the prevailing temper of a society and a time is situated in its minor voices, in their variegated chorus."

Cynthia Ozick, "Alfred Chester's Wig," *The New Yorker*, March 30, 1992.

"Literacy is elitist. It's a form of imaginative elitism that is useless if we as adult literacy educators do not recognize and promote it."

Francis E. Kazemek, "Mary's story: Reflections on literacy," *Journal of Adult and Adolescent Literacy* 42:8 May 1999.

There is only one letter's difference between the words "literacy" and "literary," but in the settings where most of us work, there is a chasm between the worlds of "adult literacy" and the "literary." So when the organizers of Blue Metropolis, the first International Literary Festival ever to be held in Montreal, contacted The Centre for Literacy last February to ask if the literacy community would like to be involved, it opened a door between what have usually been perceived in the literary world as the first class and steerage class of writing.

Linda Leith, Montreal novelist and co-editor of the literary magazine *Matrix*, had dreamed for years of organizing a local literary festival. Finally, last year, with cooperation from the English and French writing communities, she and a managing board won government and corporate support to create Blue Metropolis to bring 63 authors and translators together for five days of readings, discussions, launches, and others events for lovers of literature.

When the organizers requested some support from the National Literacy Secretariat, (NLS) the project officer asked how the literacy community was involved, which lead to the call to The Centre. The first conversation was exploratory --the festival offered free admission for adult literacy students to hear well-known writers. The Centre's board requested something more substantial. What about including a strand for community writers, to give a public voice to people who write at the margins of our society -- the community-based groups, literacy programs, support services, where writing is both expression and therapy or release? When Blue Metropolis said yes, "Grassroots: Writing in the Community" was born.

In six weeks, we gathered groups from Montreal, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Alberta, and one group from Chicago. Finances were cobbled together with NLS grant money and matching dollars in each of the four locales. At noon on April 24, we all met for the first time face to face. We had requested the smallest room available. Would anyone want to hear writers from far-flung neighbourhood centres? Perhaps we would be reading to ourselves. Surprisingly, more than seventy people showed up forcing us into a larger space.

INTRODUCTION • CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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INTRODUCTION • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For two hours, after a brief introduction of each group, writers read their work, ranging from sophisticated poetry and personal narrative to the fruits of first writings by adult beginners. The audience was mesmerized; listeners recognized truth and accorded every reader respect, no matter what the level of skill. The pieces read that day are shared in these pages along with background on the groups.

But the story has just begun. The ripples continue. In the audience was the organizer of Ottawa's literary festival, who decided that community voices should be heard there as well. He contacted Craig McNaughton, long-time social activist and past Executive Director of the Movement for Canadian Literacy, to arrange a similar session in Ottawa. Craig designed a four-hour session of reading and discussion on September 16 around the topic of literacy, community writing and social inclusion. CPAC, a local cable station videotaped the entire event for broadcast later this fall.

The groups who met last April remain in contact; Helen Woodrow has designed a distance learning writing project for several of them in the Winter of 2000. The Newfoundland, Alberta and Chicago groups have been accepted on the program of College Composition and Communication in Minneapolis to present a workshop on community writing and literacy, and Blue Metropolis has asked The Centre for Literacy to organize another event for April 2000.

What is community writing?
People have written stories since marks could be carved in walls; but over centuries, as literature slowly separated itself from its origins, and became professionalized, the only writers recognized have been those officially published or aspiring to publication. Individuals, however, never stopped writing. They still write prolifically in diaries and journals, and increasingly more publicly on the Net which may lead to new forms in the future.

But what is community writing as we have defined it? Community writing happens when ordinary people who may not think of themselves as authors meet in groups to share their writing, listen to, respect, respond to, revise, and sometimes home-publish their work. It happens outside institutions –in libraries, community centres, church basements, housing projects--and is usually unconnected to credentials or other formal rewards. It happens because people have something to say, and because recording it validates their lives or allows them to come to terms with personal demons, and allows others to understand them. It can be facilitated by a responsive outsider or by a member. As our examples demonstrate, there are no rules for starting a community writing group beyond these few common principles.

When Cynthia Ozick suggested that "the prevailing temper of a society and a time is situated in its minor voices," she was making a case for minor literary figures, in memory of a beloved colleague lost to an early death. But her insight can be extended to the unheard "minor voices" who are writing in communities all around us, including the many beginning learners in adult basic education. Stigma dissolves when community writers meet on common ground without the labels; among these writers are voices we should hear if we want to make sense of and change our world.

It has been said of the Danish Folk School that "without ever mentioning the word butter, they trained generations of farmers to make the best butter in Europe." The same claim might apply to literacy developed through community writing. It supports literacy through the literary, and part of its power comes from community ownership. Bringing it to a wider audience and acknowledging its link to the world of literature is not so different from bringing folk art into major art museums earlier in this century. It offers another way of seeing and being in the world, and an alternative to functional definitions of literacy.

Linda Shohet

LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUMEDIA FOCUS

SPECIAL INSERT • VOL 14 NO. 3 & 4

The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec H3Z 1A4

Editor: Linda Shohet • **Layout & design:** Ponctuation Grafix

The Centre for Literacy is committed to supporting and improving literacy practices in schools, community and workplace. It is dedicated to increasing public understanding of the changing definition of literacy in a complex society.

The Centre acknowledges the support of Dawson College and the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada .

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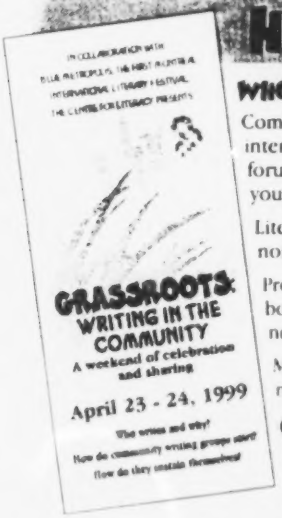
HOW WE INTRODUCED THE EVENT



WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Community-based groups already running or interested in starting writing circles in seniors forums, housing co-ops, youth programs, and similar settings.

Literacy educators/teachers interested in non-formal adult education.

Professional writers who recognize the bond between their love of literature and a need for the literary at all levels of society.

Members of the public interested in alternative forms and venues for learning.

GROUPS INCLUDE:

- Adult Basic Education Writing Network, NF
- Culture Depot, NDG Food Depot, Montreal
- The Write to Learn Project, Camrose, Alberta
- Reading the Museum Project, Saint John, NB
- Neighbourhood Writing Alliance, Chicago

TWO OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE:

On Friday, April 23, on the program of Montreal International Literary Festival, at the Hotel Europa, 1240 Drummond Street, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Hear writers read their work and talk about the impact participating in writing circles had in their lives.

On Saturday, April 24, at Dawson College, Room 3F1, 4001 De Maisonneuve West, from 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Join round tables with each participating group to get concrete information from organizers and writers on how these groups were started, and on how you can start your own or add new features to groups already in place.

Fee: Non-student $10.00 Student $5.00
This includes refreshments and hand-outs.

Montreal's annual international festival, in French, English and other languages, with over seventy distinguished writers from Montreal, Canada, the United States, Scotland, France and South Asia.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5 – SUNDAY APRIL 9, 2000

INTERNATIONAL LITERARY FESTIVAL

BLUE METROPOLIS

LOCATION

Hôtel des gouverneurs
Place Dupuis
1415 Saint Hubert Street
Montreal

For more information please contact:

PETER MCFARLANE
Festival Coordinator
Tel: (514) 487-4126
Fax: (514) 487-6487
Email: pmcfar@sprint.ca

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Who they are

Neighborhood Writing Alliance

The Neighbourhood Writing Alliance is a charitable organization based on Chicago's South Side and affiliated with the College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago. Supported by a number of funders including the MacArthur Foundation, they publish *The Journal of Ordinary Thought*, giving exposure to reflections community writers make on their personal histories and everyday experiences. It is founded on the notions that every person is a philosopher, that expressing one's thoughts fosters creativity and change, and that taking control of life requires people to think about the world and communicate their thoughts to others.

Presenters:

- Deborah Epstein, co-founder, Neighbourhood Writing Alliance
- Nannette Banks, member of the Writing Alliance

What they read

STATE STREET DRIVE/ANYWHERE USA

Nannette Banks

It ain't no fun
ridin' thru the hood anymore!
Preacher use to Preach about it sayin'
"only the walking dead live there"
Mother used to mother about it sayin'
"Brothas on the corner want nothin' more than a brown paper bag full of false hopes and dreams"
Teacher use to Teach about it sayin'
"there's a message in that bottle and by the time you've taken that last swig... you've just swallowed failure... now that can be
addictive"

It ain't no fun
ridin' thru the hood anymore!
Where vacant lots represent leveled dreams,
broken glass represents shattered lives,
& broken windows represent
the holes
in the souls
of those
who once understood that GOD is
in control.....

It ain't no fun
ridin' in the hood anymore!!
Where the memories of what used to be...
before I was... seem to haunt me like a nightmare but carry me on an abstract dream of FREEDOM!!!
When are we going to stop
HURTING each other?
When are we going to stop
KILLING each other?
When are we jus' going to become
WE?
Because it jus' ain't no fun
ridin' in the hood
ANYMORE

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TRIBUTE TO A NATION

Nannette Banks (1997)

WARNING: Sistas in motion
Watch out y'all here they come, don't you see them
With their backs straight and their heads held high
And their stride long, lean and moving them
forward...
Don't you see the Black Rainbow coming towards you?
No, No, No, don't be afraid of the showers that follow
Because they are the showers from their spirit
They are the showers from their mind,
They are the showers from their love,
They are the showers from their growth...OH!
Look ahead, look ahead, into a sea of women
Who know we have founded what is known as
This United States of America.
That we have founded what is known as
The African Rainbow
OH! We are women, we are beautiful,
And we are strong.
OH! Look out y'all because here they come
Sistas in motion,
Watch out for the African Rainbow
In a town, in a city, in a state,
Just all over the world, but somewhere near you!

WARNING: Sistas in motion,
If you are afraid either get out of the way or
Join the ranks
Because we are headed, we are going, and we are there
Because we are Sistas in motion,
Join me my Brother, join me my Sista,
Join me my Black Children,
Just join me, join me.
Come on and go on this ride with Sistas in motion.
I love you, need you, My life requires you,
So now I call you,
Let's go, let's get it, Let's hit it, Let's do it, Let's say it,
Let's stand up, not sit down.
Alright my Sistas, my Brothers, my Black People
In motion.

UNTITLED

Nannette Banks (1992)

Out
from the darkness
comes my black soul
beneath my feet
are the riches of gold
of a land I've
never touched
and people
I've never known
upon the earth
my spirit roams
I am the
Black Women

BLACK MAGIC

Nannette Banks (1998)

Somehow?
There's magic,
Holding each of your letters together, as you speak
your death defying words to me!
Now, I don't know if it's the magic from your soul,
or the movement of your lips?
But it can only be described as...
Black Magic!
Because who else and what else could cause,
each of my layers to ...disappear?
There's a spark in your eye
that keeps me so entranced in your soul.
Now, your not pulling rabbits out of your hat, or
making coins disappear!
But you are causing my soul to,
levitate and to meditate
and become centered...with yours!
Explain it to me Black Man,
the tricks of your trade.
Explain it to me Black Man,
the secrets of your soul.
Tell me Black Man,
how to balance without a net
and I will forever be at your side.

Black Magic + Black Man = Black Magic Man!
POOF! It must be...
Black Magic!

RICH HERITAGE

Nannette Banks (1997)

I come from a family of rich heritage that began with time...we painted the sky blue and the ground green with grass.

We hung the stars just so...to be guiding lights and jumped rope with the moon beams.

I come from a family of rich heritage. We played by the banks of the Nile and welcomed the Egyptian sunlight on our faces.

We built the pyramids from our sand castles and created the calendar for our daily existence.

I come from a family of rich heritage. Where my theories produced mathematics, my thoughts set forth a revolution... my footsteps discovered the underground railroad and continued on this journey for freedom.

I come from a family of rich heritage. That honors my mother as the queen and father as the king for birthing into existence this great nation of doers and go getters...

I come from a family of rich heritage.

Who they are

Reading the Museum & Read Saint John

Reading the Museum is sponsored by the Canadian Museum Association and the National Literacy Secretariat to promote the use of the museum as a resource for family literacy. As part of the program, The New Brunswick Museum developed a project titled "Once Upon a Time," a storybook collection based on the permanent gallery exhibitions. READ Saint John, a local literacy organization, was invited to write stories based on each of the galleries. Now published,.... these stories bring the displays alive and are available to museum visitors.

Presenters:

- Brenda Jarvis, Coordinator, READ Saint John
- Julie Cormier, Helen Frigault, Learners from New Brunswick Museum-Read Saint John

What they read

EXCERPT FROM
Once Upon a Time in the Fine Arts Gallery
By Julie Cormier & Brenda Jarvis

Once upon a time I came to the Fine Arts Gallery. I didn't come here by choice. I came with my sister, as she had to do a school project. My mother had to keep an appointment and she says that I am old enough to take care of myself. Sis promised me two dollars if I would come and behave myself.

I looked down a dimly lit room. A man carved out of wood was standing in the corner when we came in. He was great! He carried an old, flint lock rifle and wore feathers around his head. He was so smooth, the wood shone.

"Don't touch, Mike."
"Is this an Indian?"
I asked my sister, ignoring her commanding whisper.

"No. The name of the piece is Indian Hunter."

"Why would anyone carve a man and call him an Indian Hunter?" I asked.

"Mike, if you read your history, you would learn about all the cruel things we have done to each other."

I DIDN'T HAVE TO READ MY HISTORY.

She brought me here didn't she?

I followed her and she stopped in front of a picture that showed a group of people. They were sliding and skating. The women wore big long skirts. There were no cars around. Horses pulled people around in sleighs. She said that was what it was like here a hundred years ago.

It was quiet in this gallery, I stayed close to my sister as she looked at pictures of people. They were all straight faced. No one smiled. One picture of a woman has a squirrel in her hand. Her name was "Pamela". She held the squirrel but she didn't look at it. She seemed frozen as if she were afraid the squirrel was going to bite her.

The picture of the boy next to her didn't look friendly either. He didn't look afraid of anything. He looked like a bully. He just looked mad at the world. Across from him is a little girl. She is a pretty little girl, wearing a coat with a fur collar. She looks so sad. She made me feel sad. My sister then moved around and started into another room.

There were so many pictures of people in the gallery. My sister went from picture to picture writing down things on her pad. I sat on the seat in the middle of the room and looked around. All these people seemed to be looking at me and no one was smiling. The men were all wearing dark suits and the women all in long dresses. I got up to join my sister and their eyes followed me. It was kind of creepy.

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EXCERPT FROM
Once Upon a Time: in the Industry Gallery
By Helen Frigault & Brenda Jarvis

IMAGINE,

many years ago, one of the men you see in the picture of the lumberjacks could have been my grandfather or your great grandfather.

They worked very hard years ago. Everyone worked the farm in the early years. But only during the summer months would my father be there to work the farm. When fall came and the crops had to be harvested, all of the family worked together. We didn't have the money to hire anyone to do it for us. After the hay and buckwheat were picked and the potatoes and turnips dug from the ground, my father would leave the farm again.

Late September, after I had started back at school, my father would leave us to go to work in the lumber camp. When he returned home depended on when the ice in the river melted. We wouldn't see him until the next spring, not even during holidays. We would have the ground plowed and the seeds planted before he came home again.

THERE WERE MANY JOBS TO BE DONE **AT THE LUMBER CAMP.**

The men cut the trees with just an axe. They didn't have chainsaws, and the trees were much bigger. Some of the trees had been growing for over a hundred years. After the trees were cut, the branches had to be cut off. The trees were hitched to a horse drawn sled and hauled to the river bank. They would often water down the snow path to the river so the sled would slide easily on the ice. Huge piles of logs would be piled along the river bank.

Another man would come along and mark them to show who they belonged to after they were piled. When the ice left the river the logs were rolled down the bank and into the waiting water. That is when the log drive began.

My father loved the log drive. People would gather along the river to watch these men dance over the moving logs. Their feet moving very quickly as the logs came rolling down. They would go around and around in water while staying in one place. The loggers guided the logs, keeping them going in the right direction. Jumping swiftly from one log to the other, they would ride the logs all day. **They stopped only to eat.**

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Who they are

Writers on the Storm at The Culture Depot

The Culture Depot works to break isolation and build a sense of community among users of the NDG Food Depot in Montreal. Their philosophy is that they work together in order to improve their life situation. With support from local foundations, they offer workshops, courses, a monthly newsletter, and a variety of free entertainment. Community Writing provides a way to share experiences through the written word. The writing group calls itself Writers on the Storm and publishes its work through their own Midlands Margin Press.

Presenters:
•Phillip Amsel, George Apostolatos, Gilles Chiasson, Evelyn Terri Leckner, Grace Moore, Writers on the Storm

What they read

Some Reflections on "Culture Depot"
By Grace Moore
Tales from the Depot (1999)

I don't often find it necessary to go the NDG Food Depot for food. Nor do I need the information given out there in its other role as Info Depot. But I do go there for culture, for what is known as the Culture Depot, a third role which this place, located at 2121 Oxford, has taken on.

When you're living on welfare, you can't afford tickets to Place des Arts, or even the Centaur Theatre. This is one good reason why I have gravitated towards the Culture Depot. There's the writing group, the drama group and every third Friday of the month, that special entertainment evening known as Café Depot. The quality of culture produced at the Culture Depot ranges from highly sophisticated to rank amateur. This allows for a general freedom and spontaneity about what one is doing. It doesn't matter if your work doesn't meet certain critical standards. At Culture Depot there are no standards – other than perhaps a universally agreed upon good taste.

The wide-open approach of Culture Depot makes it easy for me to fit in there. However, when I am not producing my best work, I find I have an internal censor which kicks in, and I resent the fact that this institution is not more professional, like some others I have been involved with over the year. The struggle to produce good work is internalized in me so strongly that I do not need external censors, and when I feel I have failed in my Culture Depot activities (mainly writing and drama) I feel that I have failed absolutely. I feel that I have exposed myself prematurely, and if I had not done so, perhaps I could have produced better work next time.

It is always a scary feeling to bare your soul and sense it reeling downwards into the abyss. The consolation is that people really don't seem to mind and some people actually like things you think are awful. You tell yourself this is because they lack professional standards, a more sophisticated audience would recognize crap and you would be laughed out of their company.

None-the-less, some good work does get done. There is something to be said for the no holds barred approach of Culture Depot. There is always the possibility of producing better work next time. After all, there is not prejudice against good stuff and sometimes what is amateur has also a certain appeal.

Manifestation
By Everlyn Terri Leckner
Unpublished work

Outside in the courtyard
the ragged ones
armed with placards
were walking around in a circle
chanting slogans for the cause
in the cool rain

while the proper men and women
in the hotel dining room
silently ate their food
and drank their wine
oblivious to the festive anger

Let them eat cake!

Food Bank Story
By Philip Amsel
Tales from the Depot (1999)

Susan worked in the Food Bank. She was one of the volunteers who had seen better days. Once she was the wife to a moderately wealthy businessman. She had dreams of being someone. Then the Ax fell.

Her husband died and she was left with not much more than her pension. She found out that her husband had been in debt. She had enough to live on, but not too much. She started to volunteer at the Food Bank because her husband used to occasionally donate money there; and Susan felt that she was following the path of good work.

One day, while on the job, she met a middle-aged man who was doing deliveries for the Food Bank. He was friends with everyone.

Someone who packed food warned her about getting too involved with people at the Food Bank as they were unstable; but, she decided to go on ahead anyway, and she and the gentleman, named Danny, decided to go to breakfast together on the weekend.

At first things went well in the relationship. Danny had good manners; not common Susan thought these days. She insisted on ordering Dutch, and he seemed to be a good companion. As the days went on, Danny occasionally borrowed money from her, but he always paid her back promptly. They were two fragile middle-aged people who were trying to find solace in each other.

Danny had a mixed career. In his thirties, he had done well as a salesman for a clothing manufacturer. His gregarious personality and his sharp mind had brought him a modicum of success. However, there was a certain matter of forgery – Danny had added an extra 0 to a commission check, and he was out of a job. He never regained his poise.

Susan, of course, had her problems too. She had started taking sleeping pills in the lonely times after her husband died. She worried a lot; she found it difficult to cope without the steady hand of her husband. She wondered if Danny could take the place of her husband, yet she did not fully want to give up her independence.

Danny had squirreled out the fact that Susan had $10,000 in savings, as well as a pension of $1500.00 a month. One day as they sat in their favorite restaurant, Susan was more talkative than normal, as she felt that the time was getting closer when he might pop the question.

He wanted to ask her a question about money, but he didn't know when to begin. He started talking about his car, how it needed repairs. She told him he was a very good driver. He was feeling confident now to bring up finances. He needed money, he told Susan, to drive a taxi, but he needed a permit. Would she help him out, now that they were getting so close.

Susan hesitated, and said, "I'm sorry Danny, I cannot help you."

"I'm sorry to bother you," he said coldly. He was surprised at his own indifference.

Susan looked at him with tears in her eyes. She knew that she was saying good-bye to a companion in old age. They left the restaurant without speaking, each of them filled with regrets.

Feminist Hate Song
By Everlyn Terri Leckner
Unpublished work

You're all so boring
to condemn subtle whoring
women with cleavage
stand up and unite

why don't you sing along with Cinderella
go on out with aggressive fella
it's for your own good

you're gonna end up alone
with your Ph.D, on a throne
no man could compete with you
or for you or conquest you

God is a spirit
for woman and man
you don't need slogans
to do what you can
lighten up women
show us a smile
leave your books
and dance awhile

Put on your face
and act like a woman
right in your place
don't you want to be wanted?

Oh gentlemen look at me
treat me like a lady
need me, talk to me,
hug me, kiss me,
you know I'm a little shady

Open doors for me
treat me like an innocent child
tell me what you really think
not what "They" tell me you are

One can be a lady of the night.
I can be your lady of the night.

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A Haunting at The Food Bank
By Gilles Chiasson
Tales from the Depot (1999

'Twas October 31st; a day like any other as far as I was concerned. The sun rose in the sky and everything was as normal as it should be despite what these pesky little goblins would have had me believe when they came trick-or-treating at my door. You see, I don't go for all that Halloween night stuff. But I would soon find out otherwise, this Halloween night would not be like any other.

I suppose I should tell you that I've managed to crawl out from the oppression of being poor and now hold my own, thanks to the food bank in large part. And in gratitude, I usually try to find time on weekends to help out. But dealing with people who are struggling to put a meal on the table is very stressful. It's hard to justify the puny rations we have to hand out, a hungry belly knows no reason.

I was closing up that night, sweeping the floor and putting some order in the pantry area. I usually like doing this alone. I have a method I like to follow, it's sort of a ritual. Finally, I did one last inspection, and this was when all the trouble started. I was getting ready to turn the lights off and lock up when from the back of the food bank I heard what sounded like rattling.

"Klinkitty-klink, klinkitty-klink..."

I didn't want to leave before I checked what that noise was. I tried to track down exactly where it came from. After a few minutes of checking I heard no more noise, so I was sure it was just my imagination. I was about to turn around and go home when I heard it again.

"Klinkitty-klink, klinkitty-klink..."

I took off my jacket and decided this was something that had to be properly checked out. I went into the office for some paper and a pen, I decided I should take some notes down in case it was something serious. From my limited experience, it could have been a plumbing problem for all I knew. But I wasn't sure it wasn't a rodent eating its way in either? Other food banks have had that problem. And being that we hand out food, this might be very serious. The noise began again, only now it seemed louder.

"Klinkitty-klink, klinkitty-klink..."

I could detect, it was almost ringing from the entire bank.

"Klinkitty-klink, klinkitty-klink..."

Suddenly the overhead neons began to flicker ominously- Murphy's law. What ever can go wrong and all that jazz. I was starting to get a little steamed, it had been a long and stressful day, I just wanted to get home, but there were strange noises and failing fixtures to deal with. I went into the tool shed to find some spare neon tubes and a ladder so that I could fix the fixtures. In the back of my mind, I wondered why all four fixtures were showing signs of burnt out neons- all at the same time?

As I was dragging out the tubes I heard what sounded like furniture moving in the office. Now I knew there was no one here but myself, so I was starting to get a little spooked. I opened the door to the office and there was no one there, but I kept getting an eerie feeling something was not right when I heard that familiar sound again.

"Klinkitty-klink, klinkitty-klink..."

This was turning out to be a day from hell. Just as I got my ladder into place, the flicking tubes above began bursting apart. There was glass exploding and the noise returned with a passion.

"KLINKITTY-KLINK, KLINKITTY-KLINK..."

Then from out behind the lavatories came a blot of a bright blue ball of light. It spun hauntingly around me. When I closed my eyes I could still see this spaced out ball of light, scouring me with its radiance. Finally all the remaining neons began to blast into miniscule shards of glass and plastic. By then I was freezing up into a totally freaked out state of mind, and I was looking for a path with the least resistance. So I sat down by the mural wall, next to the coffee table and realized I had just stepped into La La Land! Oh, I hope my room at the Dougie is warm I thought to myself. I decided to relax as much as I could and look for a peaceful way out. Meanwhile, what I could see from a prone and crouching position by the coffee table, jittering like a palm tree in a hurricane, was an amazing kinda light show followed by what I would best describe as a conference with a magical wizard! Ya, the wispy and fluid kind in a funny sort of way.

First the great ball of light began to split up in a multitude of smaller balls of light and gave the place an amazing and much needed make-over. They magically replaced furniture and painted walls while replacing the toilets and other things like sinks and such. The floors were repaved and crushed and polished stone; in that Art Deco style. There were new fixtures and ample supplies of food began to instantly arrive and were magically stocked to the rafters. By now I was convinced I was truly hallucinating for the first time in my life. This was not like the other episodes I had had. I thought perhaps it was the medication, and with this I knew the hallucinations would end and all would return to normal soon enough. But just then all the balls of light coagulated into one form and then began to transform into a faint example of a triangular or conical figure. All around it flickered a rainbow of colours. It slowly glowed and changed into a more substantial wizard-looking of being. It then did something I wasn't expecting-it spoke!

"Excuse me!" it spurted.

I flinched my head up and stared into its rather friendly face and then it said.

"I didn't mean to scare you! Are you OK?" it sorta whispered.
"I'm the Great Warlock Wriven, a spirit of Hallow's eve!" he continued.

"As this is a time of the great yearly harvest, when Mother Nature provides us with a cornucopia of fresh produce, I present you with your share. And since you were also in great need for repairs, my seeds and I have taken the liberty of doing this too! I bequeath this to you and your fellow struggling masses. We do this because there are whose who scratch and tear away at the human spirit to the point of degradation for the cause of greed."

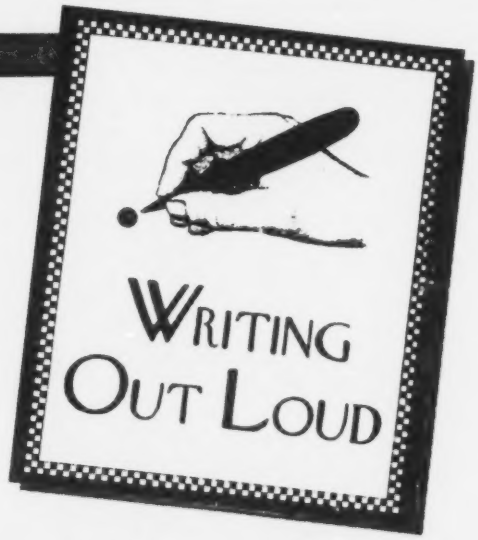
He turned and pointed to the pantry and spoke some more.
"Now I have given you more than enough to provide for the cold winter, until next spring. God bless you and Godspeed"

He vanished in a wink of an eye, taking with him the beautiful light show. I didn't even get to say a word to the Great Warlock Wriven. But by now I had to accept that I had just been visited by an honoured spirit who left behind great blessings.

This experience made that Hallows Eve the first of many special holidays. For the first time in years, I got some treats together for the little goblins who tried to trick me. This must be what the Great Spirit of Hallow's Eve was meant to be after all. A true sharing of blessings during harvest and before the dark and cold winter takes hold until the thaw and promise of a new garden next spring.

Who they are

The Write to Learn Project



The Write to Learn Project, based in Camrose Alberta, is a "national demonstration project" funded by the National Literacy Secretariat to promote the use and value of writing in adult literacy programming in Canada. The project trains student writers to facilitate "fearless writing" workshops for students (and their instructors) based on the Writing Out Loud handbook which they helped put together. They talk openly about how they used to hate writing, how they got over their fears, and how writing has now become an integral and healing part of their lives. Their stories and personal dedication inspire even the most reluctant writers to pick up a pen and begin putting words on paper.

Presenters:

- Deborah Morgan, Coordinator
- Alice Kneeland, Sharon Szott, Student writers

What they read

My Own Christmas Tree
By Alice Kneeland
From *Chapters to You*
A publication of the Camrose Chapters Program
(Fall 1995) p. 6

I remember when I was seven years old my dad said to me, "Its your turn to come and pick out a Christmas tree so we can decorate it." I remember I could hardly believe it; it was finally my turn.

It was very cold and stormy and my mom bundled me up nice and warm. My dad had an old gravel truck which sometimes had no heat in it. It was quite stormy out, but my dad had said today was the day to get some Christmas trees. (He also chopped trees down for several other families around Edberg.) It seemed to take forever, but my Uncle lived near a coulee near Donalda and there were lots of Christmas trees as we called them. We finally got there and we had to wall through deep snow into the bush. I can remember looking and looking and then I found my tree. I had to have this one. My dad smiled and said, "Do you really want this tree?"

Yes, Yes!" I said.

He didn't want to cut it down for some reason, but he did. He cut a few other trees for some other people in Edberg also. He said I had to pull the special tree, my tree, back to the truck. I remember crying because of the cold and the tree was so heavy, but I did it all the way through the snow, under a barbed wire fence, to the truck. We warmed up on hot chocolate from a thermos my mom had sent with us. When we got home, I ran to my mom and said "I found one, my Christmas tree."

My dad made a form for the tree and put it into a pail with rocks and water. It was a big tree to me. Actually it had six branches and it was only four feet tall. One of my brothers came in and said, "Another Charlie Brown tree!" I didn't know what he meant. But later my mom said all my brothers and sisters had also picked out Charlie Brown trees. I guess all of us kids thought these little trees were meant to be our special Christmas trees. We always had homemade decorations and lights on the big ones. My mom named the Christmas angel that year and the name she chose was Alice. I'll never forget what she said. She made me feel special that year because it was my tree and her special angel was on top.

When I think of the north I feel...
By Alice Kneeland
Unpublished work

When I think of the north I feel the cold wind blowing on my face. I feel the tingling on my fingers and toes, as they are near frost bitten. I feel my eye lashes sticking together, as my breath has settled on them. I feel the emptiness of the frozen north.

I feel a sense of loneliness and the hardship of the northern people that they must endure. I feel the great emotions of the native aboriginal people we met. I feel the loneliness and frustration with the hard fact they were torn between family and the Government's need for them to be educated. I feel the hearts of the home sick people as they were pulled from the familiarities of their native ways of life. I feel the need of the people to pass on their ancestor's knowledge to their children so the old ways would not be forgotten. I feel the people of the north should not be forced into our civilization. I feel tears running down their cheeks. I feel the sadness of the northern people with their struggle for new knowledge.

Conquering Fear
By Sharron Szott
Unpublished Work

They say life is what you make it
And believe me I know why,
Last night I went swimming
And went down the water slide.
The fear I had within me
I never thought I could
But it's so fun and easy
I only wish you would.

They say to face your fears
And they will go away.
I never did quite understand
Just why it worked that way.
But now that I have tried it,
It seems to work for me.
When I went down the water slide
There was one less fear in me.

When I Grow Old
By Sharron Szott
The Rainbow of Hope
A publication of the Camrose Chapters Program
(Spring 1995)

When I grow older I hope to do so many things. I will volunteer in "Chapters" to pass on the experiences I've had and learned from. I will go swimming, ride my bike and walk for miles. I'll put on a huge pot of homemade soup and make fresh bread and chocolate chip cookies. Then I will open my door so that the aroma dills the air. I will sit back in my most comfortable chair and hope someone will stop by and join me for lunch. I'll continue making goodies for all my family and friends. I'll cover coat hangers with wool I picked up at garage sales. I'll give them to anyone that might want them or teach them how to cover them like I learned to long ago. I'll rummage through thrift shops to see what I can buy for a good deal. I like wearing reds and blues and will make things out of what I find that doesn't suit me. I'll pick pussy willows and cover them with chalk. I will play scrabble with my friend if she's still around. I will go to every garage sale within walking distance. Whether it rains, snows or the wind blows, I will dress for the weather accordingly, take my walker and be on my way. I will smile at everyone I meet, hoping they will smile back and think of the days I couldn't smile so easily. Yes, its going to be fun.

Who they are

The Adult Education Writing Network

The Adult Education Writing Network sponsors writing workshops, author tours, teleconference courses and publications involving ABE students, graduates, and instructors throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Network activities have fostered extensive writing about community, and led to the creation of a number of local writing circles.

Presenters:

- Helen Woodrow, Co-ordinator, Adult Education Writing Network
- Jeanette Winsor and Tom Pierce, members of the Outlaw Writers Group, Discovery Centre, Bonavista, NF.

What they read

REMINISCING
by Kenneth Bungay
A Newfoundland Spell (1995)

I met him one day, down on the pier.
Many stories he told to me. He said
When just a lad, he fished with his dad
Upon the deep blue sea.

I listened for a while, then soon grew tired
As he talked of days gone by. Then I saw the
Loneliness in the old man's eyes. I sat again
And listened to him, his voice filled with glee,
His pale blue eyes began to shine, like
The sun upon the sea.

With weathered old hands that trembled
A little, he slowly folded his pocket knife.
"Yes, son, I love the sea," he said, "That's where
I spent my life. Just across the harbour, there
By that factory, my father built a schooner
There, in nineteen hundred and three."

"Exactly a hundred feet she was, right from
Fore to aft. Many times I climbed the rigging
And fixed the sails upon her mast. When fully
Rigged, she was something. Why I can see her now,
Dippin' her rails in the water, and white foam
Across her bow."

"Oh, what I would give to stand on her deck again
To hear her timbers softly squeak and sails
Flap in the wind. To see miles and miles of
Clear blue sea when horizons hide the land.
It's like a mirror, son, that reflects
The life of a man."

When the old man turned his head away and I saw
The reason why, a tear rolled down his weathered
Old face as he slowly wiped his eyes.

A watch he took from his vest and held it
By its chain. There on the back engraved in gold,
I saw his wife's and schooner's name. "It's
Getting late now," he said, "And I guess I'll be
Heading home. My wife passed away a while ago, and
Now I'm all alone."

He slowly stood and patted my head and said
Good-bye to me. I watched him as he walked away,
That old gentleman with nothing left,
But his memories.

"RIGHT OUTTA DA GOB"
(THE LANGUAGE OF NEWFOUNDLAND)
by Thomas Pierce
Wayfaring (1998)

Not that long ago, when a Newfoundlander got hungry, he was gut founded. He was sooky, tabbety and weeny when he got sick. To go fishing he had to take off his slip-shods and put on his long rubbers and sou'wester. He walked through his yard where the piss-a-beds and arses-fart grew, and past the flakes with the faggots to the stagehead. He checked the equipment on his smack, skiff, or dory - like his oars, gaffs, and tole pins - and finally shuffed her off. Often times crosshanded. On the bottom of the boat might lie some horney whores, conners and a scatter whores egg. Turs, shags, and gulls flew over as he left the gut, and an occasional nipper tried to bite. He fished in terrible weather - weather that consisted of misky rain, a squall, or fog as tick as pea soup. When the weather got bad enough, he tried to put ashore in a cove or tickle, and find shelter in the lun of a sea cave or some trees. He would quat, in a crump, in some coopy hole until the storm passed.

At night he would light the old wood stove using wood he had claved, chips, splits, and some shavin's. He would light his fag with a crump from the fire, sit on his porch and watch the flankers fly out of the chimney. Down at the lodge they would fire up the ol' delco, stick a slop bucket out by the door, and have a time and a scoff. He would put on his best clothes, all scunned up in the back, and go out for a waltz and a jig. Sometimes a racket would start and he might have to knock some ishmalite up side the cap.

These and other such words originated here in Newfoundland.

Many Newfoundlanders have grown up and heard their parents or grandparents say such things as, "There's a gale brewin'. Wind's up da nard." "Douse da killick afore we ends up arse first on da lamwash!" or "Da arse is gone right out of her." Possibly nowhere else in Canada or the world will you hear such words as scrunchions, scravel, or kinkharn. Where else can you mug-up on such grub as bang-belly, pease-puddin', or tatie-pork cakes, and have a hot teddy after?

What would you think if you heard someone say, 'Twas a mauzy ol day when chummy jigger went off in da woods wid e's nunny bag full o' lassy bread an' a stogger. He had a whoppin' chaw o' baccy in e's gob an' a boobagger on e's lip. E's mop was like a birch broom in da fits an' e's drars was down cross e's arse. He looked like a rag-moll, da dirty sleeveen."

Most Newfoundlanders know what a maul-rout or mummer is. The same goes for townie, baywop, or streel. But did you know that a talleywack was a trouble maker, Old Moll was the boogy-man, or gull once referred to a resident of Burgeo?

Some people may find parts of our language offensive. What would a mainlander think if he heard one of us say, "Sling da slut over da fire me ol' cock onion. Da bastards an' tickleasses is almost done." They would definitely be taken aback. "Arn" and "narn" would be a complete conversation between two fishermen on the sea. It was quick and fully understood.

Many words in the Newfoundland vocabulary have a long history. They have their roots in such languages as English, French and Scottish and Irish Gaelic to name a few. Others have evolved as early Newfoundland settlers mixed and mingled with each other. Early European settlers to Newfoundland brought with them their cultures and languages. The late seventeenth century saw a great number of English and Irish immigrants establish populations on the island, all seeking to farm its then rich waters. English and Irish merchants also sent trading ships to Newfoundland French speaking settlers in small numbers came in the eighteenth centlury and settled in the western and northern parts of the island. Acadians from other maritime provinces and French from the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon also settled here. Commercial and professional men from Scotland settled in St. John's and other eastern ports. Gaelic and English speakers from early settlements in Nova Scotia settled in western Newfoundland. All these cultures halve had some impact on the Newfoundland language.

The bulk of traditional speakers in Newfoundland live and raise their families in the hundreds of harbours and coves that line its shores. different parts of the island sometimes produce different types of dialect. Fishing terms of the Grand Banks differ from those of the inshore fishery. City terms of St. John's are hardly known elsewhere. There is no one fixed dialect for the whole island.

Newfoundland was settled very long ago by many cultures, and these cultures, to a large extent, have maintained their own peculiarities of speech. So, in essence, to be a Newfoundlander is to be unique, and truly distinct.

MY FIRST CAR
by James Tobin
A Newfoundland Spell (1995)

I bought my first car out in town.
I went to a dance with Tom Greene after I bought her.
We stayed until two o'clock in the morning.
We left to come home and we were having a few beer.
When we reached the Bay Rock, we heard a noise in theback seat.
"Are we nearly home?" a girl called out.
"No Miss, you're ninety miles from home," I said.
She started to screech and bawl. She wanted to go back home.
"No Miss, we're going to St. Mary's," I told her again.
She was in St. Mary's a week before she got home.
She stayed to my place.
We went trouting and I never carried the worms.

SLACKER
by Thomas Pierce
A Newfoundland Spell (1995)

When he quit school at age sixteen
to work at the local fish plant
his friends ridiculed him
calling him a slacker
too lazy to learn.

Fifteen years later
when he took leave from work
to return to school
his friends once again ridiculed him
calling him a slacker
too lazy to work.

Six years and two degrees later
his friends call him Boss.

THE SONG OF THE SEA
by Phyllis Holwell
Propriety and Possibilities (1996)

Where are the fishermen in from the sea,
Dancing their jigs in the old schoolhouse,
Eating fish-n-brewis before dawn?

Where are the children, tasting the salt tails of the fish,
as they spread them on the flakes,

The wives hanging clothes on lines in the warm sunshine?

Where are the fishing boats, with groove worn gunnels from jigger lines, nets just taken from the ocean, kelp still clinging to the mesh, lying on the wharf?

Where have the codfish gone? Oh lonely village, weather-beaten, gray, ghostly, no more laughter or oldfashion times.
Old man telling his stories no more.

END OF AN EVENING
by Kenneth Bungay
A Newfoundland Spell (1995)

The red glow has faded
From the old Hillcrest stove.

Tobacco spittle softly hisses
On dying embers.

Echoes of ghost stories
Grow quiet as the night.

WHAR ARE WE NOW?
By Jeanette Winsor
Unpublished Work
With permission of the author

What are we now?

as we stand on the wharves and along the shorelines watching the hulls of our boats gleaming in the summer sun.

What are we now?

that our world has been hauled from us and we can no longer stand on sea drenched deck and harvest a bountiful crop.

What are we now?

to our families, our friends, and the rest of society who look and shake their heads at our so called "idleness".

What are we now?

to the people who want to "teach" us things when we know so many things they don't care to learn.

What are we now?

as we focus on living from day to day while the sea water that runs through our veins calls us back and we ache to go.

What are we now?

does God the Omnipotent know? does Neptune of the sea know? do the furies of hell know? "What" are we now?

BOOK LEARNIN'
by Jeanette Winsor
Unpublished work
With permission from author

I knew what it was to don
warm, wet boots and hairnet
to walk up to the table and lay
cold fish fillets
atop each other
and have a place in my world
where I was not just a drain on
the taxpayer

But, those with book learnin'
Said the fish are gone.

The harbours and bays rich
with cod.

Now they want me to sell out
and get booklearnin'.

A LANGUAGE SO DEAR...
by Jeanette Winsor
Wayfaring (1998)

I have vivid memories of the language of my childhood. I enjoyed reading and being read to; I enjoyed telling stories. My father encouraged me by telling his own stories of ghosts and fairies, storms and shipwrecks, and many humorous tales.
We would sit in the kitchen, my father lying on the daybed with his arms above his head, and I perched on the end of the table with my feet on a chair, intent on his every word, questions ready for when he stopped for a breath. He was telling me the story of how he was on board of the Newfoundlander when it sank off the northern tip of Newfoundland during the spring seal hunt of 1953. His voice always started out in a "matter-of-fact" tone but quickly changed as the intensity of the story grew. My mother, reading in the rocking chair by the stove, often stopped and listened, adding her two-cents-worth from time to time. Before he would begin his stories, my father would point out locations on a huge map of Canada tacked to the wall over the kitchen table: St. Anthony, Battle Harbour, L' Anse Au Loup, Flowers Cove, Eddie's Cove...

"I minds the time when we wus off the tip of the nardern peninsula, up dere. Dat wus me first year at the swiles, and I went out wid Captain Johnny Blackmore from Port Union. We steamed nart 'til we come into the patch and we had a good day at em. Had almost all we could take. I wus down in me bunk, sleep see, cause I wus tired."
"What time was it, Dad? Late in the night?"
"Mus' a been ten or 'leven o'clock. Uncle Jim come down and tole me to get me clothes on cause we 'ad to leave the ship. She was takin' on water fas'."
"But was you 'raid?"
"Yes maid, you knows I wis. I grabbed me boots and pulled 'em on. We wouldn't over the side of her no more than ten minutes 'fore she was gone out of sight. Under the ice, t'ats all dere was of her and all our 'ard work. We lost our bit of clothes, none of us had very much, see, and all our grub was gone. We had no other choice but to start to walk ashore."

"But was it dark? How did 'e know where to go? Was you still 'fraid, Dad?"

"Naw, t'was a beautiful night. Big moon, lots of stars. But cold! My maid, we almost froze. The further we walked the colder me left foot feeled. We stopped for a while cause some of the men wus bate out. I took off me boot to rub me foot and then I realized that I had forgot to put me left stockin' on. We dodged on 'til we seen lights on the land. We come ashore in Eddie's Cove and the people there took us in and treated us good 'til we could get a way home."

With language, my father spun a web of magic and taught me to appreciate the richness of the words we shared.

My first experience of being embarrassed by my language came in my early teens. We had moved to a neighbouring town and I had befriended two young ladies whose families were classed with the local "merchants." I was a fisherman's child. I remarked rather casually one day that my mother couldn't buy me a hairbrush from the Avon catalogue because it was "too dear." I was questioned extensively on what the word "dear" meant. Surely I didn't mean the price was too "beloved," "cherished," or "sweet?" I recall struggling for a word to describe what I meant. Things have never been "too dear" for me since. I find many things "expensive," "costly," and even "pricy," but NEVER "too dear."

It has been said that language, in our society, classifies us; that the language we speak is an indication of who we are, where in other situations. Language is like clothing. Just as we need to wear formal clothing for formal gatherings, we need to use formal English in specific situations.

THE LAST WORD

Helen Woodrow, the coordinator of the Adult Basic Education Writing Network NF, who has supported community writing initiatives among instructors, literacy workers and students, organized professional development course via teleconference in Winter 1999. Entitled "Literacy: A Practices Approach," it included one session with Frances Kazemek (See To Ponder, p. 3) on expanding reading and writing practices.

One instructor reflects:

Having participated in this session with Frank Kazemek, I have become more aware of the richness of even very simple people who are often viewed as "undereducated" or "illiterate," and of the tremendous contribution they can make to society. These contributions are not only work related but also reading and writing related. We must continue to focus on what ordinary folk can do and not on what they cannot do. If there was one overall theme throughout the five sessions, I believe that was it, and as educators we must not lose sight of that.

Helen continues:

Community writing can challenge the deficit approach. In formal education settings, learners study abstract grammar, struggle to find meaningful topics for essays, and the "correct" interpretation of a poem. While instructors encourage mastery of Standard Written English, some students may feel their local dialect under threat.

Community writing starts with the needs and interests of writers, their families and communities. Writers are encouraged to write about their life experiences, and their work is often published. Community writing .... provides an audience, a motivation to write, and an opportunity to develop and refine composition and transcription skills.

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acy proposed, we have developed a literacy curriculum in which students produce (write) and analyse (read) popular media texts.

We have been examining the behaviour of these groups of students as they undertook the reading and writing activities. Through our investigation, we have developed insights into literate abilities and behaviour that at-risk students possess and can demonstrate, which traditional measures of literacy were unable to unearth. We have also explored approaches to pedagogy which enable teachers to develop the literacy of not only at-risk students, but all students in, and, perhaps even outside schools.

It seems to us, therefore, that the potential for research, curriculum development and pedagogy arising from the consideration of media education within a conceptual framework of literacy holds considerable promise. We invite colleagues in the field of media education and literacy to respond.

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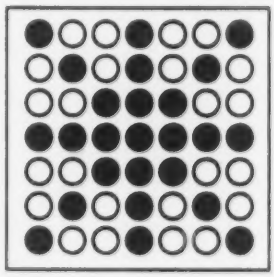
Lee Rother has been a high school teacher for twenty years. He has given numerous "media literacy" workshops for parents and teachers of children of all ages. As well, he is co-president of the Assoc-iation for Media Education in Quebec.

Winston Emery teaches at the Faculty of Education, McGill University, in the areas of Media and Technology and Language Arts. He has given many workshops on "media literacy" and has written guides for teachers.

The Centre for Literacy thanks The British Council



for making it possible for Chris Abbott, King's College, London, to join the 1999 Summer Institute on Literacy and Technology via video-conference The session allowed participants to interact with Chris and to experience and reflect on distance learning.

Verbal and visual literacies: Summaries from research

Recent academic articles from outside adult education discussing the ways we process visual and verbal information can have implications for teaching, for instructional design, and for increasing our understanding of the "new literacy." Aspects of the following summaries reinforce some of the concepts in Canadian media education outlined in the Emery/Rother article (pp.13-17); others call some of their assumptions into question. Taken together, they illustrate the many perspectives in the field, and the difficulties of making direct translations from theory to practice.

Can media education accommodate digital technology?

"Digital Technology and the End of Media Studies?" by Julian Sefton-Green in *The English and Media Magazine*, No. 40 Summer 1999, 28-34.

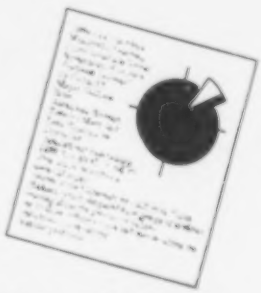
In this article, Julian Sefton-Green describes courses in Web design and computer games run by a community-based, out-of-school centre in the UK. The courses, given in a context very different from school, focus on media which are themselves only beginning to take shape as objects of study in their own right. In tracking the development and outcomes of the courses, he raises questions about the practical and theoretical challenges of the new media to traditional media education.

His questions/challenges include:

- How and at what stage should "skills" be taught?
- The nature of the computer as a production tool may work against the social and collaborative nature of traditional media production.
- How important is the role of critical discussion and reflection in the production process?
- At the theoretical level, can the new media be appropriately explained by the body of film and TV theory we now use?
- The possibility of a new media democracy presents challenges for teaching, but can offer media educators a new role in the creation and dissemination of youth cultures.

Limitations: The community-based status of the centre he describes obviously influenced the courses, and schools are different. However, he reminds us that Media Studies grew out of informal extra-curricular programs, and suggests that community-based programs might even-tually play a similar role in relation to the formal curriculum.

Implications for literacy: This research relates to other community-based initiatives, such as the ones in community writing described elsewhere in this issue. Work in new media extends the concept. It is much easier and more likely for the community to have impact on the formal sector in adult basic education than in the K-12.



Verbal and visual summaries can enhance learning of science

"When Less is More: Meaningful Learning From Visual and Verbal Summaries of Science Textbook Lessons," by Richard E. Mayer, William Bove, Alexandra Bryman, Rebecca Mars, and Lene Tapango, in *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 1996, Vol. 88 No. 1: 64-73.

This article describes a series of experiments at the University of California, Santa Barbara, which compared three groups of students reading about the process of lightning in three different ways and then recalling the information and solving transfer problems. They read (1) a summary that contained a sequence of captions with simple illustrations; (2) the full text with the summary; and (3) the full text alone. Those in group 1 showed the strongest retention and transfer. The authors conclude that current science teaching methods may rely too heavily on giving large amounts of information through text or

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lecture, but that multimedia summaries, containing text and illustration, are more effective.

They suggest criteria for effective multimedia summaries:

- Conciseness: They present only a few illustrations and sentences.
- Coherence: Images and sentences are presented in cause-and-effect sequences.
- Coordination: Images are presented with the corresponding sentence.

Limitations: They do not conclude that in all cases students learn as much from studying summaries as from full texts, but do suggest that this is an effective way of presenting scientific explanations. They suggest that "further research is needed to determine the role of carefully constructed multimedia summaries that are sensitive to the cognitive loads on visual and verbal working memories."

Implications for literacy: This research should interest both classroom teachers and tutors as well as those who are making accommodations for people with low literacy, such as the health or social service sectors. For those who may have learning or other disabilities, working memory may be even more limited than it is for mainstream learners.

How visual literacy is different from verbal

"Visual Aspects of Media Literacy," by Paul Messaris in *Journal of Communication*, Winter 1998:70-79.

In this article, Messaris, a professor of communications at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, analyzes how visual literacy differs from verbal and other modes of communication. Through examples, he explains how visual language works through analogy, not always strictly realistic, but often abstract. For instance, one of Microsoft's TV commercials for Windows '95 used the Windows logo of four coloured squares, blinking singly or simultaneously as the announcer talked, to convey the concept of multi-tasking. Messaris summarizes years of research on the syntax or rules of visual language, demonstrating how much more room there is for interpretation of the visual than exists with verbal syntax.

He concludes that "[a] visually literate person can use these properties either as tools of creative thought and expression or as foundations for resisting the potentially negative influences of visual media." They can also be a focus of formal education where more attention should be paid.

Limitations: Visual literacy should not be seen as being "in competition with verbal language learning, but as a valuable complement to it."

Implications for literacy: This research offers a clear analysis of the ways in which visual literacy differs from verbal. If, as repeated surveys such as IALS have confirmed, people with limited literacy watch more TV than others and use it as their primary source of information about the world, then it is as urgent, if not more so, to incorporate media literacy into all adult literacy programs. The materials being developed for K-12 educators need to be adapted for the adult basic education sector.

Thanks to student Alain Daigneault for bringing the last two articles to my attention. [LS]

Concerning literacy and technology

A must-read. The monthly technology column in the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* (International Reading Association) is a thoughtful and succinct (5 pages) "e-mail" on topics relating to literacy and technology. Bertram Bruce, University of Illinois, uses insight and experience to inform issues, to recommend exemplary sites and to offer short readable philosophical analyses and historical vignettes or "interpretations." One year into the feature, he now invites guest columnists to add new perspectives.

The column is available in Reading Online, IRA's electronic journal, at www.readingonline.org

Samples from the JAAL Technology column:

The Library of Babel and the Net. *JAAL* 42:7, April 1999, pp. 558-563 .

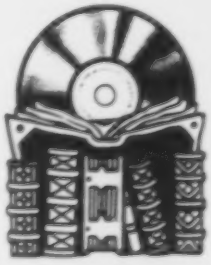
In this column, Bruce offers a brilliant reading of Jorge Luis Borges' tale "The Library of Babel" as a gloss on the literacy resources available on the Net today. Borges' story imagined a fantastic library that contained the totality of all texts ever known and promised the "clarification of humanity's basic mysteries." But it also lead to depression because with so much available, some of it would always be hidden and inaccessible. And of course, there were those who "believed that it was fundamental to eliminate useless works. They invaded the hexagons, showed credentials which were not always false, leafed through a volume with displeasure and condemned whole shelves: their hygienic, ascetic furor caused the senseless perdition of millions of books."

The Dynabook and the future of writing. *JAAL* 43:2, October 1999, pp.156-59.

Guest columnist Mike Sharples, a professor of Educational Technology at the University of Birmingham (UK), uses the story of the Dynabook to explain that the advantages of the book over the computer for reading, writing and trustworthiness are rapidly disappearing. The Dynabook was American researcher Alan Kay's 1970's vision of a powerful personal computer that could be used by children and adults to explore and create words, music, sounds, and images and animations. Sharples argues that 30 years later, the hardware has arrived in the form of the Stylistic 2300 from Fujitsu, and that it is only a matter of time until it becomes as affordable as mobile phones. He suggest that:

> Writing for the Dynabook will demand new skills to enable us to combine the narrative drive of text with the engagement of hypermedia. To do justice to the medium we shall have to learn new grammars of movie making (such as shots and translations) and hypertext (with hyperlinks and trails). We shall either become, or work alongside, people who can choreograph interaction with the reader to offer multiple pathways, layers of information, simulated conversations, and animation. The four basic skills will be reading, writing, computation, and interaction design.

While waiting for the hardware to become accessible, Sharples says we have to begin to design the software to enable authors to create the new dynamic literature; invent ways to teach the writing skills for the medium, and "reconceptualize writing as the blending of text, image, and interactivity."



Encyclopedia: Paper or plastic?

"The Canadian Encyclopedia, available only on CD-ROM since 1991, is being resurrected in print form." So opened a small story in *The National Post* in early October. In a move being hailed as a first, publisher McClelland and Stewart says that despite CD-ROM being quicker and cheaper to produce, they are returning to print because "about half of Canadian homes are without a computer and, for simple fact-finding, turning a page is still easier than searching on disc."

How many low literate adults are there in Canada, the US, and UK? Should the IALS estimates be revised?

by Thomas G. Sticht Applied Behavioral & Cognitive Sciences, Inc.

SUMMARY: In this article Dr. Sticht notes that the decision about where to make the cut-off point for each of the 5 levels on the IALS is entirely arbitrary. The IALS set it at 80 percent. This means that each respondent has an 80 percent probability of being able to do the average task at Level 1. However, it also means the same person would be expected to be able to correctly do over 45 percent of the average tasks at Level 2, 25 percent of the average tasks at Level 3, and 15 percent at the highest level of literacy. Sticht argues that because they were assigned to Level 1, these people were denied all competence above that level. He believes this might explain why most of those at Level I see themselves as competent readers and writers. He shows how the "scale of need" for adult literacy provision changes if the cut-off points are changed to 65% or to 50%. These differences can have an impact on government policy about provision. [LS]

In January of this year I prepared a working draft of a paper on assessing adult literacy for the Education Statistics Services Institute (ESSI) sponsored by the US National Center for Education Statistics in Washington, DC. I spent the second week of February in London listening to British government officials and others describe the UK's National Literacy Strategy, which included an overview of their new adult literacy initiatives. Then I spent the third week of February in Canada and discussed with government officials and others issues concerning adult literacy provision.

In this writing and travel, I noted that in each of these three nations there has been the need to determine the "scale of need" for literacy provision for adults. To do this, the governments have drawn on the results of the first International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) [see Sticht, 1998 for citations to IALS reports]. That survey, completed in 1995, used essentially the same procedures for measuring and scaling adult literacy as had been used in the earlier National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) of the US. This included the use of three scales -Prose, Document and Quantitative literacy --with scores on each scale ranging, at least in principle, from 0 to 500. In reporting scores, the IALS, like the earlier NALS, divided the range of scale scores into five literacy levels, numbered 1 to 5. The lowest level of literacy, Level 1, is what has been used in these three nations to estimate the percentage of adults most in need of adult literacy provision. In Canada, this lead to the estimate that 16.6 percent of adults were of low literacy; in the US, the estimate of lowest literacy was 20.7 percent, and in the UK, it was 21.8 percent. While the present discussion uses just the Prose scale, the other scales give similar results within one or two percentage points.

Issues in setting standards for adult literacy

When the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) was released in 1993, I raised the question of why 66 to 75 percent of adults in Level 1, the lowest level, thought they could read and write "well" or "very well." These figures were similar to those found in the later IALS for the three nations under discussion. I noted that this might result from the fact that on the Prose scale of the NALS, people with a score of 200 were assigned to Level 1 because they had an 80 percent probability of being able to do the average task at Level 1. However, these same people would be expected to be able to respond correctly to over 45 percent of the average tasks at Level 2, 25 percent of the average tasks at Level 3, and even 15 percent of the average tasks at Level 5, the highest level of literacy. Yet, because they were assigned to Level 1, all competence above that level was denied to them. Similar findings held for Document and Quantitative scales.

This earlier note raised concern with the problem of how to determine on a continuum a point or points that divide the continuum into various "amounts" of literacy. This is an issue that is being vigorously pursued in measurement and standards setting arenas today in the US (Kolstad, et al., 1998). It is critical because it underlies the practice of determining how many adults are "at risk" for poorly developed literacy skills and might therefore benefit from some level of government support for adult education.

Figure 1 (p. 22) illustrates the different sorts of conclusions that one can reach depending upon how the standards for literacy are defined.

Both the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) set a criterion of having an 80 percent probability of getting the average item at a given Literacy Level correct to be assigned to that level of skill. This resulted in some 20.7 percent of adults in the United States being classified in the lowest level of literacy.

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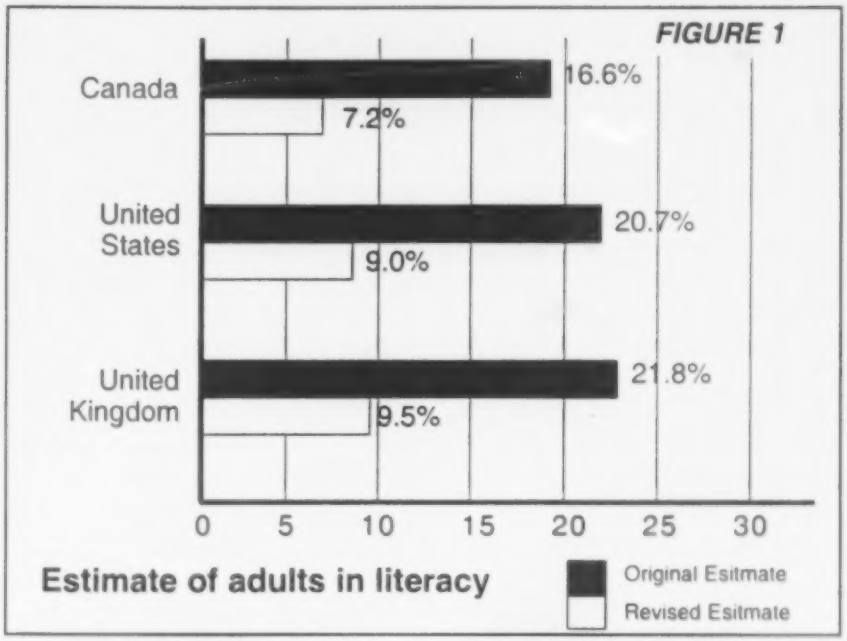

However, Andrew Kolstad, the leader of the NALS project at the National Center for Education statistics, has argued that the 80 percent probability level is arbitrary (Kolstad, 1996). He calculated the percentage of adults who would be in Level 1 if a criterion of 65 percent, which is used by the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) for the K - 12 system, were used. In this case the percentage of adults scoring below Level 3 dropped to 32, a reduction of some 15 percent.

Kolstad also determined the consequences of using the 50 percent probability criterion used by the widely employed Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) which is included in the federal government's dissemination network. In this case, only 9 percent were in Level 1.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of adults within Canada, the US and UK that fall within the lowest level of literacy for the Prose scale using the original estimates from the IALS, and the estimates that result when Kolstad's findings are applied to the data using a 50 percent probability criterion. This results in each country in about a 50 percent reduction of adults considered most "at risk" for literacy by using the 80 percent criterion of the IALS for assigning adults to the various levels.

For the three nations discussed here (and others that have used the IALS), it is important to realize that the decision to set the criterion standard of performance at the 80 percent probability level to categorize adults into one of the five levels of literacy on the IALS was an essentially arbitrary decision about what constitutes "mastery" of literacy at different levels. As noted above, it denies to adults the skills they have for actually performing tasks above the level to which they have been arbitrarily assigned. This may explain why most of the adults in Level 1 thought their literacy skills were just fine for meeting the requirements of everyday life. They could, in fact, perform quite a few (one in six) of the most difficult literacy tasks.

In more recent analyses, Kolstad (personal communication, January 26, 1999) has demonstrated that the use of the 50 percent probability criterion produces the least errors in predicting whether adults can or cannot perform literacy tasks across the full range of tasks included in the NALS. At the present time in the US, stimulated by Kolstad's work, there is considerable debate at the National Center for Education Statistics about just which standards should be used for all national assessments, including those for school children and adults (Kolstad, et al., 1998).

This debate is likely to extend beyond the US into Canada and the UK as these nations, and others in the industrialized world, try to formulate national policies for adult literacy provision based upon methods for representing the "true" scale of need in the new millennium.

References

Kolstad, A. (1996, April) *The Response Probability Convention Embedded in Reporting Prose Literacy Levels from the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Kolstad, A. et. al. (1998, May) *The Response Probability Convention Used in Reporting Data From IRT Assessment Scales: Should NCES Adopt a Standard?* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Sticht, T. (1998, September). *Beyond 2000: Future Directions for Adult Education.* Washington, DC: U. S. Office of Education, Division of Adult Education and Literacy.

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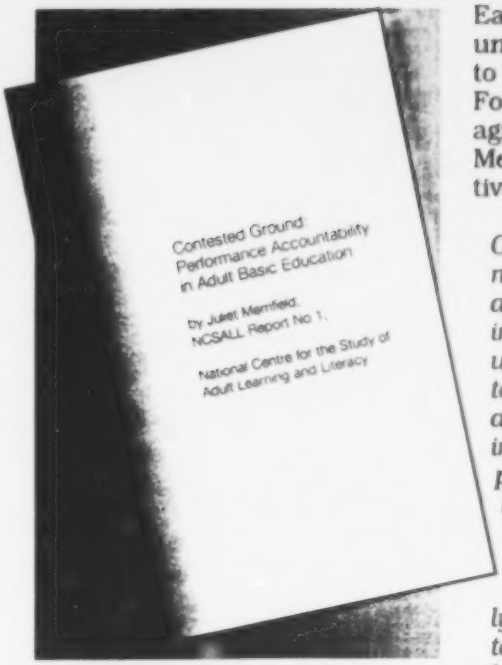
Tel/Fax: 619-444-9595
E-mail: tsticht@aznet.net

Accountability in adult education: International perspectives

[This review was first published by NIACE, the UK national organisation for adult learning, in Adults Learning, Vol. 10 No.4, March 1999, and is reprinted here with permission. It appeared around the publication time of the Moser Report which recommended a dramatic transformation of adult basic skill provision for the UK.]

Contested Ground: Performance Accountability in Adult Basic Education.

by Juliet Merrifield, NCSALL Report No 1, National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Boston Massachusetts, July 1998. 86pp, $10
reviewed by Jay Derrick, City and Islington College, London



This report appeared with perfect timing just as the Moser Review Committee was being set up [in the UK]: in my view it could hardly be more helpful to the committee's work. It is concerned with adult basic education in the US, but this only makes it more useful to us in Britain, providing as it does a clear conceptual approach to ABE work, and cutting through the undergrowth of assumptions and practices that have grown up in this country over the past twenty five years, virtually unmediated by policy development.

Merrifield's description of the parameters of US Adult Basic Education in the 90s is true also of Britain. There have been fundamental shifts in understanding about literacy skills and practices which have yet to be incorporated into teaching and policy; the purpose of literacy teaching has not yet been defined; stakeholders in the learning process are not mutually accountable; capacity is weak and inconsistent; and tools for measuring quality and effectiveness are not up to the task. She argues that four principles must be adopted: agreeing values for ABE, i.e. what needs to be measured; building mutual accountability relationships; developing capacity both to perform and to be accountable; and creating new tools to measure performance. This could be an agenda for the Moser Committee -- one hopes they were made aware of this paper in time for their deadline.

Each of these principles is unpacked and followed through to recommendations for action. For example, in relation to agreeing values for ABE, Merrifield states in her executive summary:

> *Good performance - what needs to be measured - is not a technical question, but inevitably in the realm of values. The challenge is to come to agreement on performance as a 'big tent' which can include the full diversity of purposes. Experience from business and industry suggests that it is crucial that performance be defined neither too tightly nor too loosely. If performance is defined too tightly a mismatch between system goals and individual goals may occur....if performance is framed too loosely, no shared mission or common accountability measures can be developed. Getting it right requires a broad-based and inclusive process involving multiple stake-holders* (p.ix).

'Good performance - what needs to be measured - is not a technical question, but inevitably in the realm of values.'

This demonstrates how Merrifield's approach integrates the measurement of performance in ABE, necessary to justify and evaluate allocations of public funding, and so as to improve provision systematically, with the development of what she calls 'mutual accountability relationships'. She argues that we need to switch from one-way, top-down lines of accountability, to a mutual web of relationships with accountability flowing in all directions.

Her view is that we need to bring all stakeholder groups, including learners and teachers, 'to the table'; that we must provide support for stakeholders who have had least access to information and power, including learner organisations at national and local levels; and that we must increase information flow among and between all stakeholders.

These proposals sit very well with the overall post-school educational policy focus in the UK since the publication of the Kennedy Report and the election of the Labour government. Kennedy argued that widening participation is a matter of process as well as numbers, and that it is vital not just for improving educational attainment and industrial competitiveness but also for addressing increasing social inequality. Juliet Merrifield provides support for this policy approach in the context of ABE not primarily on moral grounds but in terms of effectiveness, and that is why the paper should appeal to teachers.

Furthermore, she brilliantly links the discussion to the literature on learning organisations:

> *High performance or 'learning organisations' from the business world may prove useful models for adult education. These emphasise continuous improvement and learning in all parts of the organisation, responsiveness to internal and external customers, participation in decisions, and shared responsibility at all levels. Traditional models of accountability are linear - quality control inspectors check widgets at the end of the production line to see if they meet specifications. Mutual accountability engages members of the organisation in developing common vision, determining goals and customer expectations, and designing effective means of monitoring, producing and improving* (p.viii).

The National Centre for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL)
has published some outstanding research reports in the past three years. They put out summaries called "Research Briefs"

For a list of publications, call (617) 482-9485 or
e-mail NCSALL@WorldEd.org
Web site: http://gseweb.harvard.edu/~ncsall.

'This approach is vital when we remember that a third of all adults are not engaging in any form of education or training, feeling 'it is not for them'.'

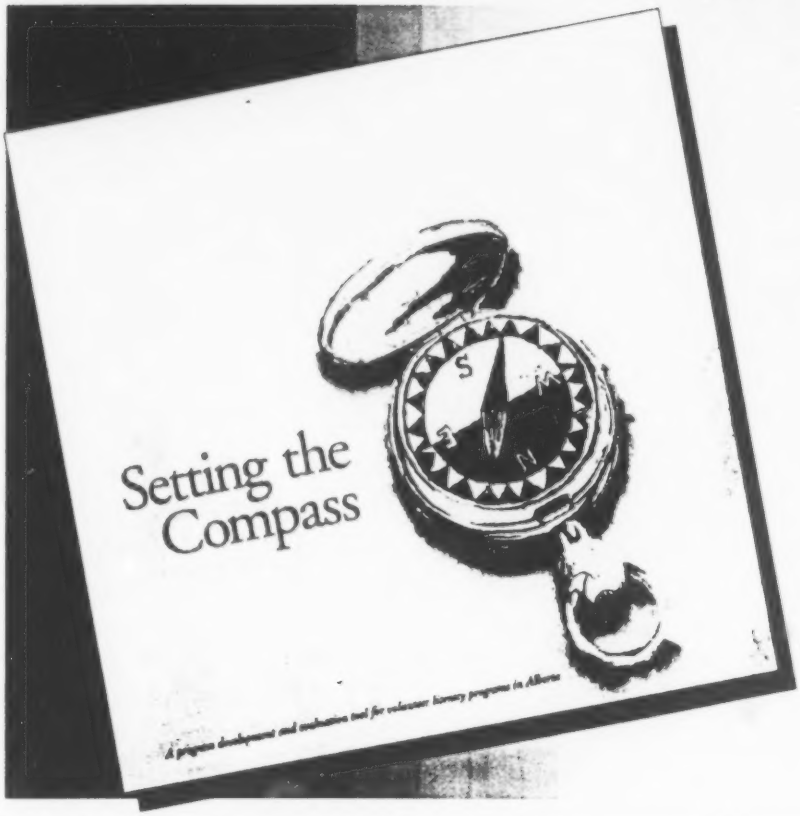
This approach is vital when we remember that a third of all adults are not engaging in any form of education or training, feeling 'it is not for them'. The way we work and what we offer must be transformed so that it helps people achieve their purposes, whether short or long term, whether to write a letter of complaint, or to navigate through a life-change process.

What I find refreshing here is that there is something for all of us to learn: ABE practitioners will find support for their calls for a wider, less centrally-determined curriculum, for more student and teacher involvement in policy-making and for more resources for ABE. Policy-makers and auditors will find arguments and practical proposals for performance measurement and increased effectiveness. Merrifield's point is that all these elements must be present, and that none of these objectives is achievable without the others. She offers a rational framework based on up-to-date theoretical work for developing such systems. I heartily recommend this paper to everyone concerned with Adult Basic Education. The references will also be very interesting to most British [and Canadian] readers.

Jay Derrick is Head of English and Basic Skills at City and Islington College which has just been awarded a contract to design a basic skills program for the 17,000 employees of the London Underground.

Setting the Compass: A Program Development and Evaluation Tool for Volunteer Literacy Programs in Alberta

by Sharon Skage and Marnie Schaetti, Association of Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, 1999.178 pp.



Another excellent tool developed in Alberta but useful for programs anywhere. This step-by-step binder is the outcome of a provincial project by the Association of Literacy Coordinators of Alberta to develop a set of good practice statements and of program standards, followed by a process for program evaluation.

None of the statements or standards opens any new territory, but the packaging is clear and focused, and because it was developed with grassroots consultation and 98% approval from provincial coordinators, there is some hope that it may become more than another document on a shelf, at least in Alberta.

It is intended for day-to-day use in programs, not for comparison between programs. The writers understand the constraints under which most programs operate and recommend adopting the process in stages. They also know its limitations. While acknowledging that an external evaluation is the best way to eliminate bias, they recognize that it is not an option for most volunteer programs. This tool has drawn on some of the best thinking in the field worldwide and adapted it into a usable modular format.

Afterthought: Scanning the number of such tools that have been developed over the past decade (many of them cited in the excellent bibliography here) and the similarity among them, one wonders whether it is the tool itself that is of most value or the process of winning community investment in the concepts of good practice and evaluation. Then again, how many "new" tools are needed in the world before we see some substantial changes in adult literacy practice and outcomes? [LS]

The Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)
has just published

DESTINATION LITERACY:
Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities.

Watch our web site in November for a review by
Shelley Ryan, an adult educator with
the Western Quebec School Board in Hull, Quebec.

Our Website: www.nald.ca/litcent.htm
To order, contact LDAC, 323 Chapel Street, # 200, Ottawa, ON Canada K1N 7Z2
Tel.: (613)238-5721; Fax: (613) 235-5391
E-mail: ldactaac@fox.ntsn.ca
Web site: http://educ.queensu.ca/~lda

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Information:
Meg Sinclair, Librarian,
(514) 931-8731, ext. 1415.
literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

The titles listed here have been selected from our collection to show the range of materials available on this subject

Resources: Community Writing

550.055
• Clarke, Mallory. *Discovery and Respect: A Handbook for Student directed Group Learning.* Seattle, WA: Goodwill Literacy Adult Centre, 1991.

1210.076
• Cooper, Marilyn and Michael Holzman. *Writing as Social Action.* Carbonale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987.

1250.019
• Gere, Anne Ruggles. *Writing Groups: History, Theory, and Implications.* New York, NY: Random House, 1989.

461.032
• Goethel, Jan. *Telling Tales: How to Produce a Book of Stories by Parents and their Children.* Eau Claire, WI: Literacy Volunteers of America-Chippewa, 1995.

515.001
• McCarthy, Marie, Bronwyn Tanner, and Betty Robertson. *Reading the Museum: A Resource Handbook.* Fredericton, NB: Literacy Council of Fredericton, 1997.

1210.049
• Monce, Dave. *The Adventures of Dr. Alphabet.* New York, NY: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1995.

280.009
• Morgan, Deborah. *Writing Out Loud.* Camrose, AB: Writing Out Loud, 1997.

415.046
• Paul, Marianne. *Living and Learning.* Kitchener, ON: Core Literacy, Waterloo Region, 1993.

1152.015
• Sark. *Succulent Wild Woman.* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997.

1152.016
• Sark. *The Bodacious Book of Succulence: Daring To Live Your Succulent Wild Life!* New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998.

1210.066
• Stillman, Peter R. *Families Writing.* 2nd ed. Portland, ME: Calendar Islands Publishers, 1998.

1030.013
• Thair, Maree. *Highlights of Our Lives: A Guide to Creating Writing Circles for Seniors.* Prince George, BC: College of New Caledonia, 1998.

MINI-COLLECTIONS
A new initiative at The Centre

NATIVE LITERACY TRUNK

Thanks to Rotary Club of Vieux Montreal for sponsoring the project.

With a grant from Rotary International, The Centre for Literacy is creating mini-collections of literacy resources for six native communities in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces. A prototype trunk has been developed collaboratively with the Mohawk community in Kahnawake, south of Montreal. It will remain there for eleven months for use by teachers and community developers and return once a year to The Centre for upgrading. The project has been designed to support local initiatives to help parents encourage their children to read and prepare them to enter school. It recognizes the connections among learning, parenting, health, and culture.

Graphic courtesy of Parkland Regional College

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Media Education Conferences Quicklist

Summit 2000: Children, Youth and The Media Beyond the Millennium
May 13 - 16, 2000, Toronto ON
Information:
E-mail: pungente@chass.utoronto.ca

Chronological Conference Listing Local

Local

QPAT Teachers' Convention '99
Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Steven Pinker
November 4 & 5, 1999
Montreal QC
Information: Ron Hughes or Donal Irving, QPAT. Tel.: (514) 694-9777 or 1-800-361-9870
Fax: (514) 694-0189

Learning Disabilities Association of Quebec (LDAQ) 25th International Conference on Learning Disabilities
March 16 -17, 2000
Montreal, QC
Information: Tel.: (514) 847-1324
Fax: (514) 281-5187
E-mail: aqeat@sympatico.ca
Web site: http://educ.queensu.ca/~lda/aqeta

Association of Teachers of English of Quebec (ATEQ) Springboards 2000
April 7, 2000, Montreal, QC
Information: Lesley Pasquin.
Tel.: (514) 697-2480, ext. 1272
E-mail: lpasquin@lbpsb.qc.ca
To present: Contact Ann Beer.
Tel.: (514) 398-6746, ext. 5135
ßE-mail: beer@education.mcgill.ca by November 15.

Blue Metropolis Literary Festival
April 5 - 9, 2000, Montreal, QC
Information: Linda Leith.
Tel.: (514) 694-7237;
E-mail: lindaleith@attcanada.net;
Web site: www.blue-met-bleu.com

National/International

16th National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing
October 29 - 31, 1999
Penn State University
Information: Julie Story, Conference Director, Center for Excellence in Writing, 206 Bourke Building, University Park, PA 16802-5900.
Tel.: (814) 865-0259
Fax: (814) 863-7285
E-mail: jas12@psu.edu
Web site: www.chss.iup.edu/wc/ncptw

Canadian Lifelong Learning Lyceum '99
November 4 - 7, 1999
Ottawa, ON
Information: Tel.: (780) 421-7141 or 1-800-596-5392
www.lifelonglearning.ca

Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW)
Designing our future: Women's learning, education, and training in Canada -- 2000 and beyond
A National Congress
November 4 - 7, 1999
Toronto, ON
Information: Gladys Watson.
Tel.: (416) 532-9108
Fax: (416) 533-9062

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
November 18 - 23, 1999
Denver CO
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096.
Tel: (217) 328-3870, ext. 203 or 1-800-369-6283, ext.251
Fax: (217) 328-0977; www.ncte.org

Modern Language Association (MLA)
December 26 - 30, 1999
Chicago, IL
Information: MLA, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 1003-6981

National Association for Women in Education
13th Annual International Conference on Women in Higher Education
January 8 -11, 2000
New Orleans, LA
Information: NAWE, 1325 18th Street, NW #210, Washington, DC 20036-6511

9th Annual National Conference on Family Literacy
January 24 - 26, 2000
Orlando, FL
Information: Tel.: PARADE Family Literacy InfoLine 1-877-FAMLIT-1 or (502) 584-1131; www.famlit.org

Writing Across the Disciplines Conference "Making Connections VIII"
February 18, 2000
Florida International University
Information: Robert Ratner, Writing Across the Disciplines, Florida International University, Miami, FL 33199.
Tel: (305) 348-3327

CSUN Fifteenth Annual Conference
Technology and Persons with Disabilities
March 20 -25, 2000
Los Angeles, CA
Information: Center on Disabilities, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA. Tel.: (818) 677-2578
Fax: (818) 677-4929
E-mail: ltm@csun.edu
Proposal forms available at www.csun.edu/cod/

TESOL 2000
March 2000
Vancouver, BC
Information: www.tesol.edu

Conference on College Composition and Communication (4Cs)
April 13 -15, 2000
Minneapolis, MN
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096
Tel: (217) 328-3870, ext. 203 or 1-800-369-6283, ext.251
Fax: (217) 328-0977; www.ncte.org

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CONFERENCES

International Reading Association (IRA)
April 30 - May 5, 2000
Indianapolis, IN
Information: IRA, 800 Barksdale Rd., PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA
Tel.: (302) 731-1600, ext. 216 or (800) 336-READ
Fax: (302) 731-1057
E-mail: teverett@reading.org

An International Conference on Literacy in Prison "Literacy 2000: Towards Reintegration"
Ottawa, Ontario
April 30 - May 3, 2000

Summit 2000: Children, Youth and The Media Beyond the Millennium
May 13 - 16, 2000
Toronto ON
Information: John J. Pungente, SJ, Jesuit Communication Project, 60 St. Clair Avenue E. #1002, Toronto, On, Canada, M4T 1N5.
Tel.:(416) 515-0466
Fax: (416) 515-0467
E-mail: pungente@chass.utoronto.ca

Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) First Canadian Conference on Literacy and Health
May 28- 30, 2000
Ottawa, ON
Information: Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA), 400-1565 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1Z 8R1
Tel.:(613) 725-3769
Fax: (613) 725-9826
E-mail: conferences@cpha.ca
Web site: www.nald.ca/nlhp.htm

Laubach Literacy Action Biennial Conference
June 8 - 10, 2000
Orlando, FL
Information: Janet Hiemstra, Laubach Literacy Action, 1320 Jamesville Ave., Box 131, Syracuse, NY 13210 Usa:
Tel.: (315) 422-9121, ext. 283
Fax: (315) 422-6369
E-mail: jhiemstra@laubach.org

Education for Social Democracies International Conference
July 3 - 6, 2000
London, UK
Information: Culture, Communication and Societies Group, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1:
Fax: 011 44 171 612 6177
E-mail: p.dowling@ioe.ac./uk
Web site: www.ioe.ac.uk/ccs/conference 2000

Fourth International Conference for Global Conversations on Language and Literacy
August 2 - 5, 2000
Utrecht, the Netherlands
Information: NCTE Global Conversations, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096
Fax: (217) 278-3763; www.ncte.org

Summer Institutes 2000

The Centre for Literacy, Georgia Tech Lifelong Learning Network, and Frontier College "Adult Literacy and Television"
May 18 - 20, 2000
Toronto, ON
Information: Tel: (514) 931-8731, ext 1415; Fax (514) 931-5181
E mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

Summer Institute for Teachers of Literature (NCTE)
June 2000
Myrtle Beach SC
Information: NCTE, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096,
Tel: (217) 328-3870, ext. 203 or 1-800-369-6283, ext.251
Fax: (217) 328-0977; www.ncte.org

8th Annual Summer Institute Low Literacy Communication Skills for Health Professionals Maine AHEC Health Litercay Center
Date: TBA
University of New England
Biddeford, ME
Information: UNE Office of Continuing Education, 11 Hills Beach Road, Biddeford, ME 04005.
Tel.: (207) 283-0170, Ext.2440

Eighth Annual Institute in Management and Community Development
June 2000
Concordia University
Montreal, QC
Information: Institute in Management and Community Development, Concordia University, Loyola Campus,7141 Sherbrooke Street West, CC 326, Montreal, QC, H4B 1R6.
Tel.: (514) 848-3956
Fax: (514) 848-4598

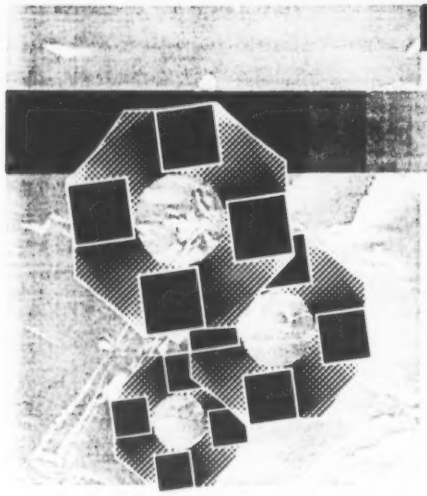
Summer Institute for Teachers: Computers in Writing-Intensive Classrooms
with Dr. Cynthia Selfe & Dr. Gail Hawisher
June 2000
Michigan Technological University
Houghton, MI
Information: Gretchen Janssen, Office of Conferences and Institutes, Michigan Technological University, 1400 Townsend Drive, Houghton, MI 49931-1295:
Tel.: (906) 487-2263
Fax: (906) 487-3101
E-mail: ci@mtu.edu

Martha's Vineyard Summer Workshops: 2000 Institute on Writing and Teaching
July 2000
Information: Becky Mallaghan, Martha's Vineyard Summer Workshops, Dpartment of Englsih, 406 Holmes Hall, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115,
Tel.: (781)373-3637
E-mail: bmallagh@lynx.neu.edu
Web site: www.casdn.neu.edu /~english/gradx.htm

National Writing and Thinking Network: Workshops in Writing and Thinking for High School Students
July 2000
Information: Judi Smith, Bard College, PO Box 5000, Annandale -on-Hudson, NY 12504-5000,
Tel.: (914) 758-7484
E-mail: jsmith@badr.edu

Writing Program Administration (WPA) Summer Workshop and Conference
July 2000
Information: Tel.: (520) 621-3371
E-mail: enos@u.arizona.edu

N.B When we do not have exact dates, we print the month and contact information.



The Centre for Literacy & Dawson College

WORKSHOPS & SEMINARS
1999-2000

MULTIPLE LITERACIES INTO THE MILLENNIUM

The program of workshops and seminars for 1999-2000 is built on the theme of multiple literacies. The sessions offer parents, teachers, researchers, policy makers and members of the general public new and alternative ways of thinking about traditional reading and writing for children and adults in different contexts. They connect drama, storytelling, art, media and technology to literacy. They also look at the accommodations that homes, schools and society have to make for those who can never fully master traditional literacy as defined by the establishment in order for them to live with dignity and respect as citizens in a democratic society.

"Storysacks" or Literacy in a Bag

Facilitator: Jan Greer, New Brunswick Committee on Literacy
Date: Wednesday, November 3, 1999
Time: 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Health, literacy and community

Facilitator: Mary Norton, The Learning Center, Edmonton
Date: Thursday, November 18, 1999
Time: 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Can media literacy be called literacy?

Leaders: Lee Rother, teacher and Winston Emery, McGill University
Date: Originally scheduled for [illegible]nber
Time:

POSTPONED TO SPRING 2000
DATES T.B.A.

Storymaking in education: Responding to stories using the expressive arts and group work

Leader: Leigh Bulmer, Drama Therapist
Date: Wednesday, February 16, 2000
Time: 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Successful adults with learning disabilities

Facilitator: Rosalie Fink, Lesley College
Date: Wednesday, March 16, 2000
Time: 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Integrating technology into our curriculum: The next chapter

Facilitator: Deborah Gross, Education Technology, MEQ.
Date: Wednesday, March 22, 2000
Time: 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Education, technology and learning disabilities: A look from the inside

Facilitator: Pat Hatt, Adult literacy & LD specialist
Date: Monday, April 27, 2000
Time: 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.

For information, call , (514) 931-8731, local 1415. FAX (514) 931-5181
E-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
Web-site: http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

79

AVAILABLE FROM THE CENTRE

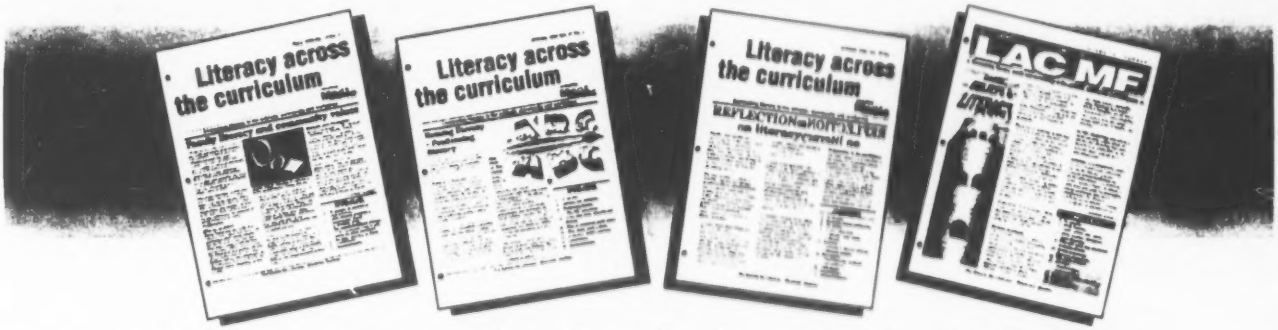
The Centre for Literacy is the North American distributor for the UK National Storysacks Project

Storysacks: A Starter Information Manual

A "Storysack" is a large cloth bag containing a good quality picture book and supporting materials to stimulate reading activities. These include soft toys of the main characters, props and scenery relating to the story, a non-fiction book linked to the fiction theme, an audio tape and a language game based on the book. There is a prompt card with ideas for parents and teachers to develop children's listening, reading and writing skills, using the contents of the sack. The sacks are made by parents or other volunteers in the community. "Storysacks" was developed by British principal Neil Griffiths to create excitement about reading and parent involvement in his own elementary school. Storysacks Workshops have since been attended by more than 40,000 people in the UK.

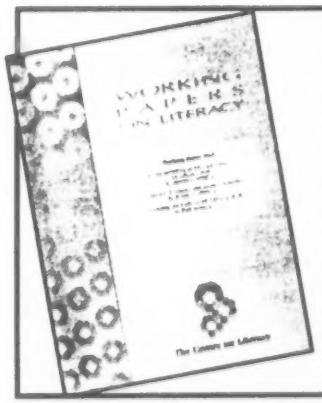
The Manual provides a guide to creating Storysacks, using them in home and school settings, and engaging community involvement.

Price: $15. plus $2 handling and postage.



Literacy Across the Curriculum & Media Focus:
BACK ISSUES IN A BINDER

Volumes 10, 11, 12 and 13 can now be purchased in a single binder with index.
16 issues cost $25, plus $5 postage and handling (Compare to $2.50/back issue plus p&h)



Working Papers in Literacy

No. 1 *Perspectives on IALS*, Graff, Street, Jones
No. 2 *Media literacy, information technology and the teaching of English*, Abbott and Masterman
No. 3 *Behaviour and beliefs of volunteer literacy tutors*, Hambly
No. 4 *Literacy and ICT*, Abbott

Numbers 1, 3 and 4 are on our Web site.
Print copies of all Papers can be ordered. **PRICE:** Canada, $6; US, $7.; Overseas, $10.; prices include handling and postage.

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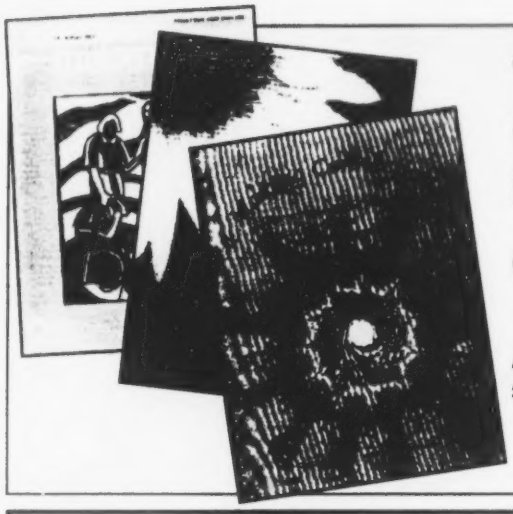
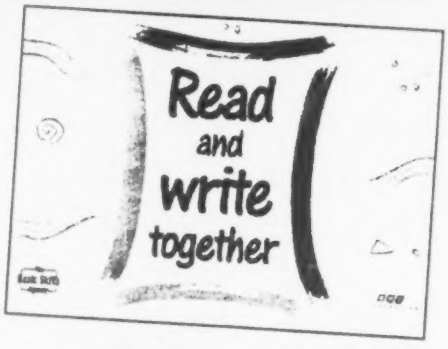


The Centre for Literacy is the distributor for all of the CCLOW's products and publications

Check on our web site for prices

A portion of all proceeds from the sales supports activities on women and literacy



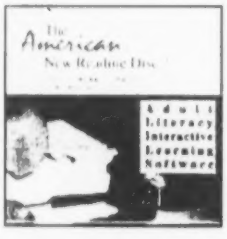
Read and Write Together:
An activity pack for parents and children

This kit was produced by The Basic Skills Agency and BBC Education in February 1995 for a national Family Literacy promotion campaign in the UK.

Price: $15. plus $2 handling and postage.

SOFTWARE

The New Reading Disc
The acclaimed UK multimedia product designed by CTAD to help adult basic learners improve their reading and writing. Built in Authoring Tool allows teachers to create local culturally appropriate materials.



The American New Reading Disc
(developed by CRT at Georgia Tech)
An American version of the original UK product with American topics and context, but the same prototype with Authoring Tool.

L.I.R.E.
Le Logiciel Interactif de Réentraînement à l'Ecriture propose un nouveau concept qui, à travers l'utilisation d'ordinateurs Multimédia, permet à des personnnes d'améliorer leurs capacités à lire et à écrire en français.

Health, Communication and Literacy: An Annotated Bibliography, 2ND EDITION

The second edition contains 53 entries on selected articles which have appeared in health journals since 1990.

It includes a list of further articles on the subject and web sites of interest

Price: $10. includes handling and postage.

Information on software pricing and orders:
The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street W., Montreal, QC, Canada, H3Z 1A4
Tel.: (514) 931-8731, ext. 1415
Fax: (514) 931-5181
E-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

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MARK THESE DATES - SUMMER INSTITUTE 2000

May 18 - 20, 2000 • Toronto Ontario

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- How has television been used to create public awareness and to represent adult literacy around the world?
- How has television been used as a tool for teaching adult literacy and basic skills?

Adult literacy and television

An untapped resource?

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